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Wiley Publishing, Inc.

Published by:

WILEY PUBLISHING, INC.
111 River St.
Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

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ISBN 978-0-470-28787-3

Editor: Linda Barth
Production Editor: Katie Robinson
Cartographer: Andrew Murphy
Photo Editor: Richard Fox
Production by Wiley Indianapolis Composition Services

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Manufactured in the United States of America

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1 Fast Facts: London 191

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About the Authors

As a team of veteran travel writers, **Darwin Porter** and **Danforth Prince** have produced dozens of previous titles for Frommer's, including many of their guides to Europe, the Caribbean, Bermuda, The Bahamas, and parts of America's Deep South. A film critic, columnist, and radio broadcaster, Porter is also a noted biographer of Hollywood celebrities, garnering critical acclaim for overviews of the life and times of, among others, Marlon Brando, Katharine Hepburn, Humphrey Bogart, Howard Hughes, and Michael Jackson. Prince was formerly employed by the Paris bureau of the *New York Times,* and is today the president of ***www.BloodMoonProductions.com*** and other media-related firms. In 2008, Porter and Prince collaborated on the release of their newest book about Hollywood, sexuality, and sin as filtered through 85 years of celebrity excess, *Hollywood Babylon—It's Back!*

An Invitation to the Reader

In researching this book, we discovered many wonderful places—hotels, restaurants, shops, and more. We're sure you'll find others. Please tell us about them, so we can share the information with your fellow travelers in upcoming editions. If you were disappointed with a recommendation, we'd love to know that, too. Please write to:

Frommer's Portable London 2009
Wiley Publishing, Inc. • 111 River St. • Hoboken, NJ 07030-5774

An Additional Note

Please be advised that travel information is subject to change at any time—and this is especially true of prices. We therefore suggest that you write or call ahead for confirmation when making your travel plans. The authors, editors, and publisher cannot be held responsible for the experiences of readers while traveling. Your safety is important to us, however, so we encourage you to stay alert and be aware of your surroundings. Keep a close eye on cameras, purses, and wallets, all favorite targets of thieves and pickpockets.

Frommer's Star Ratings, Icons & Abbreviations

Every hotel, restaurant, and attraction listing in this guide has been ranked for quality, value, service, amenities, and special features using a **star-rating system.** In country, state, and regional guides, we also rate towns and regions to help you narrow down your choices and budget your time accordingly. Hotels and restaurants are rated on a scale of zero (recommended) to three stars (exceptional). Attractions, shopping, nightlife, towns, and regions are rated according to the following scale: zero stars (recommended), one star (highly recommended), two stars (very highly recommended), and three stars (must-see).

In addition to the star-rating system, we also use **seven feature icons** that point you to the great deals, in-the-know advice, and unique experiences that separate travelers from tourists. Throughout the book, look for:

Finds	Special finds—those places only insiders know about
Fun Fact	Fun facts—details that make travelers more informed and their trips more fun
Kids	Best bets for kids and advice for the whole family
Moments	Special moments—those experiences that memories are made of
Overrated	Places or experiences not worth your time or money
Tips	Insider tips—great ways to save time and money
Value	Great values—where to get the best deals

The following **abbreviations** are used for credit cards:

AE American Express	DISC Discover	V Visa
DC Diners Club	MC MasterCard	

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Now that you have this guidebook to help you plan a great trip, visit our website at **www.frommers.com** for additional travel information on more than 4,000 destinations. We update features regularly to give you instant access to the most current trip-planning information available. At Frommers.com, you'll find scoops on the best airfares, lodging rates, and car rental bargains. You can even book your travel online through our reliable travel booking partners. Other popular features include:

- Online updates of our most popular guidebooks
- Vacation sweepstakes and contest giveaways
- Newsletters highlighting the hottest travel trends
- Podcasts, interactive maps, and up-to-the-minute events listings
- Opinionated blog entries by Arthur Frommer himself
- Online travel message boards with featured travel discussions

1 Planning Your Trip to London

If your documents are in order, flying into London is one of the most effortless undertakings in global travel. There are no shots to get, no particular safety precautions, no unusual aspects of planning a trip. With your passport, airline ticket, and enough money, you just go. In general, if you're not bringing any illegal item into the British Isles, Customs officials are courteous and will speed you through entry into their country.

Of course, before you lift off the ground in your native country, you can do some advance preparation as will be detailed in this chapter and in the appendix. That could mean checking to see if your passport is up-to-date (or obtaining one if you don't already possess one), or taking care of your health needs before you go, including medication. In the case of London, you might want to make reservations at some highly acclaimed restaurants or even buy tickets in advance to hit plays in London's West End.

In the pages that follow, you'll find everything you need to know about the practicalities of planning your trip in advance.

1 Visitor Information

Before you go, you can obtain general information from **Visit Britain** (www.visitbritain.com):

- In the United States: 551 Fifth Ave., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10176-0799 (✆ **800/462-2748** or 212/986-2266).
- In Canada: Call ✆ **888/VISITUK** (847-4885).
- In Australia: Level 2, 15 Blue St., North Sydney 2060 (✆ **02/9021-4400**).
- In New Zealand: Fay Richwite Blvd., 17th Floor, 151 Queen St., Auckland (✆ **0800/700-741**).

For a full information package on London, write to **Visit London,** 2 More London Riverside, 6th Floor, Bermondsey SE1 2RR (✆ **020/7234-5800;** www.visitlondon.co.uk).

The London Tourist Board's **London Visitor Centre,** 1 Lower Regent St., London SW1Y 4XT (✆ **8701/566-366;** www.visitlondon.com; Tube: Piccadilly Circus), can help you with almost anything, from the most superficial to the most serious. Located within a 10-minute walk from Piccadilly Circus, it deals chiefly with procuring accommodations in all price categories through an on-site travel agency (www.lastminute.com), and you can also book transit on British Rail or with bus carriers throughout the U.K. There's a kiosk for procuring theater or group tour tickets, a bookshop loaded with titles dealing with travel in the British Isles, a souvenir shop, and a staff that's pleasant, helpful, and friendly. It's open year-round Monday 9:30am to 6:30pm, Tuesday to Friday 9am to 6:30pm, and Sunday 9am to 5pm. Between October and May, Saturday hours are 10am to 4pm, and between June and September, Saturday hours are 9am to 5pm.

A roughly equivalent organization that was conceived to help foreign visitors with their inquiries and confusion about London is the **London Information Centre,** at Leicester Square, W1 (✆ **020/7292-2333;** www.londoninformationcentre.com; Tube: Leicester Sq.). The London Information Centre is a privately owned, commercially driven organization that may have a vested interest in steering you toward a particular venue.

An option that might help you navigate your way through the logistics of one of the world's biggest cities involves your call to ✆ **0800/LONDON** (566-366) for city information and to book sometimes discounted rates for London hotels, theaters, sightseeing tours, and airport transfers. A sales staff is available daily from 8am to midnight.

WHAT'S ON THE WEB? The most useful site was created by a very knowledgeable source, the British Tourist Authority itself, with U.S. visitors targeted. A wealth of information can be tapped at **www.visitbritain.com**, which lets you order brochures online, provides trip-planning hints, and even allows e-mail questions for prompt answers. All of Great Britain is covered.

Go to **www.baa.com** for a guide and terminal maps for Heathrow, Gatwick, and Stansted airports, including flight arrival times, duty-free shops, airport restaurants, and info on getting from the London airports to downtown London. Getting around London can be confusing, so you may want to visit **www.tfl.gov.uk** for up-to-the-minute info. For the latest on London's theater scene, consult **www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk**. For directions to specific places in London, consult **www.streetmap.co.uk**.

MAPS At **www.multimap.com**, you can access detailed street maps of the whole United Kingdom—just key in the location or even just the postal code, and a map of the area with the location circled will appear. For directions to specific places in London, consult **www.streetmap.co.uk**.

2 Entry Requirements

PASSPORTS

To enter the United Kingdom, all U.S. citizens, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, and South Africans must have a passport valid through their length of stay. No visa is required. A passport will allow you to stay in the country for up to 6 months. The immigration officer will also want proof of your intention to return to your point of origin (usually a round-trip ticket) and of visible means of support while you're in Britain. If you're planning to fly from the United States or Canada to the United Kingdom and then on to a country that requires a visa (India, for example), you should secure that visa before you arrive in Britain.

Your valid driver's license and at least 1 year of driving experience are required to drive personal or rented cars.

For information on how to get a passport, see "Passports" in the "Fast Facts: London" section of the appendix (p. 195). The websites listed provide downloadable passport applications as well as the current fees for processing passport applications. For an up-to-date, country-by-country listing of passport requirements around the world, go to the "Foreign Entry Requirement" Web page of the U.S. Department of State at **www.travel.state.gov**.

CUSTOMS

WHAT YOU CAN BRING INTO BRITAIN

Non-E.U. nationals 18-plus can bring in, duty-free, 200 cigarettes, or 100 cigarillos, or 50 cigars, or 250 grams of smoking tobacco. This amount is doubled if you live outside Europe. You can also bring in 2 liters of wine and either 1 liter of alcohol more than 22% or 2 liters of wine less than 22%. In addition, you can bring in 60cc (2 oz.) of perfume, a quarter liter (250mL) of eau de toilette. Visitors 15 and older may also bring in other goods totaling £145 ($290); the allowance for those 14 and younger is £73 ($146). (Customs officials tend to be lenient about general merchandise, realizing the limits are unrealistically low.)

You can't bring your pet to Britain. Six months' quarantine is required before it is allowed in. An illegally imported animal may be destroyed.

WHAT YOU CAN TAKE HOME FROM BRITAIN

U.S. Citizens

For specifics on what you can bring back and the corresponding fees, download the invaluable free pamphlet *Know Before You Go* online at **www.cbp.gov**. Or contact the **U.S. Customs & Border Protection (CBP),** 1300 Pennsylvania Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20229 (✆ **703/526-4200**), and request the pamphlet.

Canadian Citizens

For a clear summary of Canadian rules, write for the booklet *I Declare,* issued by the **Canada Border Services Agency** (✆ **800/461-9999** in Canada, or 204/983-3500; www.cbsa-asfc.gc.ca).

U.K. Citizens

For information, contact **HM Revenue & Customs** at ✆ **0845/010-9000** (from outside the U.K., 02920/501-261), or consult their website at **www.hmrc.gov.uk**.

Australian Citizens

A helpful brochure available from Australian consulates or Customs offices is *Know Before You Go.* For more information, call the **Australian Customs Service** at ✆ **1300/363-263,** or log on to **www.customs.gov.au**.

New Zealand Citizens

Most questions are answered in a free pamphlet available at New Zealand consulates and Customs offices: *New Zealand Customs Guide for Travellers, Notice no. 4.* For more information, contact **New Zealand Customs Service,** The Customhouse, 17–21 Whitmore St., Box 2218, Wellington (✆ **04/473-6099** or 0800/428-786; **www.customs.govt.nz**).

3 When to Go

THE WEATHER

Yes, it rains, but you'll rarely get a true downpour—it's heaviest in November (2½ in. on average). British temperatures can range from 30° to 110°F (–1° to 43°C), but they rarely drop below 35°F (2°C) or go above 78°F (26°C). Evenings are cool, even in summer. Note that the British, who consider chilliness to be wholesome, like to keep the thermostats about 10°F below the American comfort level.

Hotels have central heating systems, which are usually kept just above the goose bump (in Britspeak, "goose pimple") margin.

LONDON CALENDAR OF EVENTS

For an exhaustive list of events beyond those listed here, check **http://events.frommers.com**, where you'll find a searchable, up-to-the-minute roster of what's happening in cities all over the world.

January

January Sales. Most shops offer good reductions at this time. Many sales start as early as late December to beat the post-Christmas slump.

London Parade. Bands, floats, and carriages contribute to the merriment as the parade wends its way from Parliament Square to Berkeley Square in Mayfair. January 1. Procession starts around noon.

March

Oranges and Lemons Service, at St. Clement Danes, the Strand, WC2. As a reminder of the nursery rhyme "Bells of St. Clements," children are presented with the fruits during the church service, and the church bells ring out the rhyme (part of which is "Oranges and Lemons, Say the bells of St. Clements") at 9am, noon, and 6pm; call ✆ **020/7242-8282;** www.st-clement-danes.co.uk for information. Third week of March.

April

Easter Parade. Floats, marching bands, and a full day of Easter Sunday activities enliven Battersea Park. Free. Easter Sunday.

Flora London Marathon. Thirty thousand competitors run from Greenwich Park to Buckingham Palace. Call ✆ **020/7902-0200** or visit www.london-marathon.co.uk for more information or to register for the marathon. Mid- to late April.

The **Queen's Birthday.** The Queen's birthday is celebrated with 21-gun salutes in Hyde Park and by troops in parade dress on Tower Hill at noon. April 21.

National Gardens Scheme. More than 3,000 private gardens in London are open to the public on set days, and tea is sometimes served. Pick up the NGS guidebook from most bookstores, or contact the National Gardens Scheme Charitable Trust, Hatchlands Park, East Clandon, Guildford, Surrey GU4 7RT (✆ **014/8321-1535;** fax 014/8321-1537; www.ngs.org.uk). Late April to early May.

May

The **Royal Windsor Horse Show,** Home Park, Windsor Castle, outside London. You might spot a royal at this multiday horse-racing and horse-showing event. Call ✆ **01753/860-633** or visit www.royal-windsor-horse-show.co.uk for more details. Mid-May.

Chelsea Flower Show, Chelsea Royal Hospital. This show exhibits the best of British gardening, with displays of plants and flowers from all seasons. The show runs from 8am to 8pm. Tickets must be purchased in advance; they are available through the Royal Horticultural Society (www.rhs.org.uk). Call ✆ **0845/260-5000** for information. Four days in May.

June

Trooping the Colour. This is the Queen's official birthday parade, a quintessential British event, with exquisite pageantry and pomp as she inspects her regiments and takes their salute, while they parade their colors before her at the Horse Guards Parade, Whitehall. Tickets for the parade and two reviews, held on preceding Saturdays, are allocated by ballot. Applicants must write between January 1 and the end of February, enclosing a self-addressed stamped envelope or International Reply Coupon to the Ticket Office, HQ Household Division, Horse Guards, Whitehall, London SW1X 6AA. Tickets are free. The ballot is held in mid-March, and only successful applicants are informed in April. Call ✆ **020/7414-2479;** www.trooping-the-colour.co.uk for more details. Held on a day designated in June (not necessarily the Queen's actual birthday).

Lawn Tennis Championships, Wimbledon, London. Ever since players took to the grass courts at Wimbledon in 1877, this tournament has attracted quite a crowd, and there's still an excited hush and a certain thrill at Centre Court. Savor the strawberries and cream that are part of the experience. Early bookings for the world's most famous tennis tournament are strongly advised. Acquiring tickets and overnight lodgings during the annual tennis competitions at Wimbledon can be difficult to arrange independently. Two outfits that book both hotel accommodations and tickets to the event are **Steve Furgal's International Tennis Tours,** 11305 Rancho Bernardo Rd., Ste. 108, San Diego, CA 92127 (✆ **800/258-3664** or 858/675-3555; www.tours4tennis.com); and **Championship Tennis Tours,** 13951 N. Scottsdale Rd., Ste. 133, Scottsdale, AZ 85254 (✆ **800/468-3664** or 480/429-7700; www.tennistours.com). Tickets for Centre and Number One courts are obtainable through a lottery. Write in from August to December to **All England Lawn Tennis Club,** P.O. Box 98,

Church Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 5AE (✆ **020/8944-1066;** www.wimbledon.org). Outside court tickets are available daily, but be prepared to wait in line. Late June to early July.

Shakespeare Under the Stars, Open Air Theatre, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, NW1 4NU. If you want to see *Macbeth, Hamlet,* or *Romeo and Juliet* (or any other Shakespeare play), our advice is to bring a blanket and a bottle of wine to watch the Bard's works performed at the Open Air Theatre. Performances are Monday through Saturday at 8pm, plus Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday at 2:30pm. Call ✆ **0844/826-4242** or visit www.openairtheatre.org.uk for more information and to buy tickets. There is an on-site box office, but it's best to purchase tickets in advance. Previews begin in late June, and the season lasts until early September.

July

Kenwood Lakeside Concerts, north side of Hampstead Heath. Fireworks and laser shows enliven the excellent performances at these annual outdoor concerts on Hampstead Heath. Classical music drifts across the lake to the fans every Saturday and Sunday in summer from early July to late August. Call ✆ **020/7413-1443** for a schedule and information and to buy tickets. Tickets are popular, so buy yours in advance. Early July to late August.

Hampton Court Palace Flower Show, East Molesey, Surrey. This 5-day international flower show is eclipsing its sister show in Chelsea; here, you can purchase the exhibits on the last day. Call ✆ **0845/260-5000** or visit www.rhs.org.uk for exact dates and details. Early to mid-July.

The **Proms,** Royal Albert Hall. "The Proms"—the annual Henry Wood Promenade Concerts at Royal Albert Hall—attract music aficionados from around the world. Staged daily, the concerts were launched in 1895 and are the principal summer venue for the BBC Symphony Orchestra. Banners, balloons, and Union Jacks on parade contribute to the festive summer atmosphere. Call ✆ **020/7589-8212** or visit www.bbc.co.uk/proms for more information and for tickets. Tickets should be bought in advance. Mid-July to mid-September.

August

Notting Hill Carnival, Ladbroke Grove, London. Notting Hill is the setting for one of the largest annual street festivals in Europe, attracting more than half a million people. There's live reggae and soul music, plus great Caribbean food. Call ✆ **020/7727-0072,** or see **www.nottinghillcarnival.biz** for information. Two days in late August.

September

Raising of the Thames Barrier, Unity Way, SE18. Once a year, in September, a full test is done on the flood barrier. All 10 of the massive steel gates are raised out of the river for inspection, and you can get a close look at this miracle of modern engineering. Call ✆ **020/8854-8888** for the exact date and time (usually a Sun near the end of Sept).

The **Ascot Festival,** Ascot, Berkshire, SL5 7JN. This is Britain's greatest horse-racing weekend, providing the grand finale to the summer season at Ascot. The 3-day "meeting" combines some of the most valuable racing of the year with other entertainment. A highlight of the festival is the £250,000 ($500,000) Watership Down Stud Sales race restricted to 2-year-old fillies. Other racing highlights include the Queen Elizabeth II Stakes, with the winning horse crowned champion miler in Europe. To book tickets, call ✆ **0870/727-1234** or visit www.ascot.co.uk. Last weekend in September.

November

Guy Fawkes Night. On the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot, an attempt to blow up King James I and his Parliament, huge bonfires are lit throughout the city and Guy Fawkes, the most famous conspirator, is burned in effigy. Free. Check *Time Out* for locations. November 5.

Lord Mayor's Procession and Show, from the Guildhall to the Royal Courts of Justice, in The City of London. This annual event marks the inauguration of the new lord mayor of The City of London. The Queen must ask permission to enter the City—a right jealously guarded by London merchants during the 17th century. You can watch the procession from the street; the show is by invitation only. Call ✆ **020/7222-4345** or visit www.lordmayorshow.org for more information. Second Saturday in November.

4 Money & Costs

London is becoming one of the most expensive cities on the planet, far more expensive than New York (Brits now view the Big Apple as a bargain basement). London is not as expensive as Tokyo or Oslo, but even an average hotel rate can cost £100 ($200) or more—in many cases, much, much more.

You'll avoid lines at airport ATMs by exchanging at least some money—just enough to cover airport incidentals and transportation to your hotel—before you leave home (though don't expect the

exchange rate to be ideal). You can exchange money at your local American Express or Thomas Cook office or at your bank. American Express also dispenses traveler's checks and foreign currency via www.americanexpress.com or ✆ **800/673-3782,** but they'll charge a $15 order fee and additional shipping costs.

POUNDS & PENCE

Britain's decimal monetary system is based on the pound (£), which is made up of 100 pence (written as "p"). Pounds are also called **quid** by Britons. There are £1 and £2 coins, as well as coins of 50p, 20p, 10p, 5p, 2p, and 1p. Bank notes come in denominations of £5, £10, £20, and £50.

As a general guideline, the price conversions in this book have been computed at the rate of £1 = $2. Bear in mind, however, that exchange rates fluctuate daily.

ATMs & Cashpoints

ATMs are widely available in London. The easiest and best way to get cash away from home is from an ATM, sometimes referred to as a "cash machine" or a "cashpoint." The **Cirrus** (✆ **800/424-7787;** www.mastercard.com) and **PLUS** (✆ **800/843-7587;** www.visa.com) networks span the globe; look at the back of your bank card to see which network you're on, then call or check online for ATM locations at your destination. Be sure you know your personal identification number (PIN) and daily withdrawal limit before you depart.

There are problems involved in the use of ATMs. For example, if you make a mistake and punch your secret code wrong into the machine three times, that machine will swallow your card on the assumption that it is being fraudulently used.

Users with alphabetical rather than numerical PINS may be thrown off by the lack of letters on London cash machines. If your PIN is longer than four digits, check with your bank to see if you can use the first four digits or will you have to get a new number for use in Britain.

To get cash advance by using a credit card at an ATM, ask for a PIN from your credit card company such as Visa before leaving your home country.

Note: Remember that many banks impose a fee every time you use a card at another bank's ATM, and that fee can be higher for international transactions (up to $5 or more) than for domestic ones (where they're rarely more than $2). In addition, the bank from which you withdraw cash may charge its own fee. For international withdrawal fees, ask your bank.

CREDIT CARDS

Credit cards are another safe way to carry money, but their use has become more difficult, especially in London (see below). They also provide a convenient record of all your expenses, and they generally offer relatively good exchange rates. You can usually withdraw cash advances from your credit cards at banks or ATMs, provided you know your PIN. Keep in mind that you'll pay interest from the moment of your withdrawal, even if you pay your monthly bills on time. Also, note that many banks now assess a 1% to 3% "transaction fee" on **all** charges you incur abroad (whether you're using the local currency or your native currency).

There is almost no difference in the acceptance of a debit or a standard credit card.

Chip and PIN represents a change in the way that credit and debit cards are used. The program is designed to cut down on the fraudulent use of credit cards. More and more banks are issuing customers Chip and PIN versions of their debit or credit cards. In the future, more and more vendors will be asking for a four-digit personal identification or PIN that will be entered into a keypad near the cash register. In some cases, a waiter will bring a hand-held model to your table to verify your credit card.

Warning: Some establishments in London might not accept your credit card unless you have a computer chip imbedded in it. The reason? To cut down on credit card fraud.

Major Change in Credit Cards

In the interim between traditional swipe credit cards and those with an embedded computer chip, here's what you can do to protect yourself.

- Get a four-digit PIN from your credit card's issuing bank before leaving home. Or call the number on the back of each card and ask for a four-digit PIN.
- Keep an eye out for the right logo displayed in a retailer's window. You want Visa or MasterCard, not Maestro, Visa Electron, or Carte Bleue.
- Know that your AmEx card will work where an AmEx logo is displayed (but the card is not as widely accepted as Visa and MasterCard).
- As a last resort, make sure you have enough cash to cover your purchase.

More and more places in London are moving from the magnetic strip credit card to the new system of Chip and PIN. In the changeover in technology, some retailers have falsely concluded that they can no longer take swipe cards or signature cards that don't have PINs.

For the time being both the new and old cards are used in shops, hotels, and restaurants regardless of whether they have the old credit and debit cards machines or the new Chip and PIN machines installed. Expect a lot of confusion when you arrive in England or elsewhere.

TRAVELER'S CHECKS

You can buy traveler's checks at most banks, and they are widely accepted in London, although frankly merchants prefer cash. Because of difficulties with credit cards (see above) or ATMs that can reject your card for no apparent reason, travelers are once again buying traveler's checks for security in case something goes wrong with their plastic. They are offered in denominations of $20, $50, $100, $500, and sometimes $1,000. Generally, you'll pay a service charge ranging from 1% to 4%.

The most popular traveler's checks are offered by **American Express** (✆ **800/528-4800,** or 800/221-7282 for cardholders—this number accepts collect calls, offers service in several foreign languages, and exempts AmEx gold and platinum cardholders from the 1% fee); **Visa** (✆ **800/732-1322**)—AAA members can obtain Visa checks for a $9.95 fee (for checks up to $1,500) at most AAA offices or by calling ✆ **866/339-3378;** and **MasterCard** (✆ **800/223-9920**).

American Express, Thomas Cook, Visa, and **MasterCard** offer **foreign currency traveler's checks,** which are useful if you're traveling to one country, or to the euro zone; they're accepted at locations where dollar checks may not be.

If you carry traveler's checks, keep a record of their serial numbers separate from your checks in the event that they are stolen or lost—you'll get your refund faster.

5 Specialized Travel Resources

TRAVELERS WITH DISABILITIES

Many London hotels, museums, restaurants, and sightseeing attractions have wheelchair ramps, less so in rural England. Persons with disabilities are often granted special discounts at attractions, called "concessions" in Britain, and, in some cases, nightclubs. Free information and advice is available from **Holiday Care Service,**

The Hawkins Suite, Enham Place, Andover SP11 6JS (✆ **0845/124-9971;** fax 0845/124-9972; www.holidaycare.org.uk).

Many bookstores in London carry ***Access in London*** (www.accessinlondon.org; £12/$24), a publication listing facilities for persons with disabilities, among other things.

The transport system, cinemas, and theaters are still pretty much off-limits, but **Transport for London** publishes a leaflet called *Access to the Underground,* which gives details of elevators and ramps at individual Underground stations; call ✆ **020/7222-1234** or visit www.tfl.gov.uk. And **London Black Cab** (✆ **0845/108-3000;** www.londonblackcab.com) is perfectly suited for those in wheelchairs; the roomy interiors have plenty of room for maneuvering.

London's most visible organization for information about access to theaters, cinemas, galleries, museums, and restaurants is **Artsline,** 54 Chalton St., London NW1 1HS (✆ **020/7388-2227;** fax 020/7383-2653; www.artsline.org.uk). It offers free information about wheelchair access, theaters with hearing aids, tourist attractions, and cinemas. Artsline mails information to North America, but it's more helpful to contact Artsline once you arrive in London; the line is staffed Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm.

Many travel agencies offer customized tours and itineraries for travelers with disabilities. **Flying Wheels Travel** (✆ **507/451-5005;** www.flyingwheelstravel.com) offers escorted tours and cruises that emphasize sports and private tours in minivans with lifts. **Access-Able Travel Source** (✆ **303/232-2979;** www.access-able.com) offers extensive access information and advice for traveling around the world with disabilities. **Accessible Journeys** (✆ **800/846-4537** or 610/521-0339; www.disabilitytravel.com) caters specifically to slow walkers and wheelchair travelers and their families and friends.

Organizations that offer assistance to travelers with disabilities include **MossRehab** (✆ **800/CALL-MOSS** [2255-6677]; www.mossresourcenet.org), which provides a library of accessible-travel resources online; the **American Foundation for the Blind** (**AFB;** ✆ **800/232-5463** or 212/502-7600; www.afb.org), a referral resource for the blind or visually impaired that includes information on traveling with Seeing Eye dogs; and **SATH** (Society for Accessible Travel & Hospitality; ✆ **212/447-7284;** www.sath.org), which offers a wealth of travel resources for all types of disabilities and informed recommendations on destinations, access guides, travel agents, tour operators, vehicle rentals, and companion services. **AirAmbulanceCard.com** (✆ **877/424-7633**) allows you to pre-select top-notch hospitals in case of an emergency.

The "Accessible Travel" link at **Mobility-Advisor.com** (www.mobility-advisor.com) offers a variety of travel resources to persons with disabilities.

Check out the quarterly magazine ***Emerging Horizons*** (www.emerginghorizons.com), published by SATH.

GAY & LESBIAN TRAVELERS

London has one of the most active gay and lesbian scenes in the world. Gay bars, restaurants, and centers are plentiful.

Lesbian and Gay Switchboard (✆ **020/7837-7324;** www.llgs.org.uk) is open 24 hours a day, providing information about gay-related activities in London or advice in general. London's best gay-oriented bookstore is **Gay's the Word,** 66 Marchmont St., WC1N 1AB (✆ **020/7278-7654;** www.gaystheword.co.uk; Tube: Russell Sq.), the largest such store in Britain. The staff is friendly and helpful and will offer advice about the ever-changing scene in London. It's open Monday through Saturday from 10am to 6:30pm and Sunday from 2 to 6pm. At Gay's the Word and other gay-friendly venues, you can find a number of publications, many free, including the popular ***Boyz.*** Another free publication is ***Pink Paper*** (with a good lesbian section), and check out ***9X,*** filled with data about new clubs and whatever else is hot on the scene.

The **International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association** (**IGLTA;** ✆ **954/630-1637;** www.iglta.org) is the trade association for the gay and lesbian travel industry, and offers an online directory of gay and lesbian-friendly travel businesses.

Many agencies offer tours and travel itineraries specifically for gay and lesbian travelers. **Above and Beyond Tours** (✆ **800/397-2681;** www.abovebeyondtours.com) is a gay and lesbian tour operator. **Now, Voyager** (✆ **800/255-6951;** www.nowvoyager.com) is a well-known San Francisco–based gay-owned and -operated travel service. **Gay.com Travel** (✆ **415/834-6500;** www.gay.com/travel or www.outandabout.com) is an excellent online successor to the popular ***Out & About*** print magazine. It provides regularly updated information about gay-owned, -oriented, and -friendly lodging, dining, sightseeing, nightlife, and shopping establishments in every important destination worldwide.

The following travel guides are available at many bookstores, or you can order them from any online bookseller: ***Spartacus International Gay Guide*** (Bruno Gmünder Verlag; www.spartacusworld.com) and ***Odysseus: The International Gay Travel Planner*** (Odysseus

Enterprises, Ltd.); and the ***Damron*** guides (www.damron.com), with separate, annual books for gay men and lesbians.

For more gay and lesbian travel resources, visit frommers.com.

SENIOR TRAVEL

Many discounts are available to seniors. Be advised that in Britain you often have to be a member of an association to get discounts. Public-transportation discounts, for example, are available only to holders of British Pension books. However, many attractions do offer discounts for seniors (women 60 or older and men 65 or older). Even if discounts aren't posted, ask if they're available.

If you're 61 and older, you're eligible for special 10% discounts on **British Airways (BA)** through its Privileged Traveler program. You also qualify for reduced restrictions on APEX cancellations. Discounts are also granted for BA tours and for intra-Britain air tickets booked in North America. **BritRail** offers seniors discounted rates on first-class rail passes around Britain.

Don't be shy about asking for discounts, but carry some kind of identification that shows your date of birth. Also, mention you're a senior when you make your reservations. Many hotels offer seniors discounts. In most cities, people 61 and older qualify for reduced admission to theaters, museums, and other attractions, and discounted fares on public transportation.

Members of **AARP,** 601 E St. NW, Washington, DC 20049 (✆ **888/687-2277;** www.aarp.org), get discounts on hotels, airfares, and car rentals. AARP offers members a wide range of benefits, including *AARP The Magazine* and a monthly newsletter. Anyone 51 and older can join.

Many reliable agencies and organizations target the 50-plus market. **Elderhostel** (✆ **800/454-5768;** www.elderhostel.org) arranges worldwide study programs for those ages 55 and older.

Recommended publications offering travel resources and discounts for seniors include the quarterly magazine ***Travel 50 & Beyond*** (www.travel50andbeyond.com); ***Unbelievably Good Deals and Great Adventures That You Absolutely Can't Get Unless You're Over 50*** (McGraw-Hill), by Joann Rattner Heilman.

Frommers.com offers more information and resources on travel for seniors.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN TRAVELERS

Black Travel Online (www.blacktravelonline.com) posts news on upcoming events and includes links to articles and travel-booking

sites. **Soul of America** (www.soulofamerica.com) is a comprehensive website, with travel tips, event and family-reunion postings, and sections on historically black beach resorts and active vacations.

Agencies and organizations that provide resources for black travelers include **Rodgers Travel** (✆ **888/823-1775;** www.rodgerstravel.com). For more information, check out the following collections and guides: ***Go Girl: The Black Woman's Guide to Travel & Adventure*** (Eighth Mountain Press), a compilation of travel essays; ***The African American Travel Guide*** by John Haggins; ***Steppin' Out*** by Carla Labat (Avalon); and ***Pathfinders Magazine*** (✆ **215/438-2140;** www.pathfinderstravel.com), which includes articles on everything from Rio de Janeiro to Ghana, as well as information on upcoming ski, dive, golf, and tennis trips.

SINGLE TRAVELERS

Many people prefer traveling alone, and for independent travelers, solo journeys offer infinite opportunities to make friends and meet locals. Unfortunately, if you like resorts, tours, or cruises, you're likely to get hit with a "single supplement" to the base price. Single travelers can avoid these supplements, of course, by agreeing to room with other single travelers on the trip. An even better idea is to find a compatible roommate before you go, from one of the many roommate locator agencies.

Travel Buddies Singles Travel Club (✆ **800/998-9099;** www.travelbuddiesworldwide.com), based in Canada, runs small, intimate, single-friendly group trips and will match you with a roommate free of charge and save you the cost of single supplements. **TravelChums** (✆ **212/787-2621;** www.travelchums.com) is an Internet-only travel-companion matching service with elements of an online personals-type site, hosted by the respected New York–based Shaw Guides travel service.

Many reputable tour companies offer singles-only trips. **Singles Travel International** (✆ **877/765-6874;** www.singlestravelintl.com) offers singles-only trips to London. **Backroads** (✆ **800/462-2848;** www.backroads.com) offers more than 160 active trips to 30 destinations worldwide, including England.

For more information on traveling single, go to www.frommers.com.

6 Staying Connected

TELEPHONES

To call England from North America, dial **011** (international code), **44** (Britain's country code), the local area codes (usually three or four digits and found in every phone number we've given in this book), and the local phone number. The local area codes found throughout this book all begin with "0"; you drop the "0" if you're calling from outside Britain, but you need to dial it along with the area code if you're calling from another city or town within Britain. For calls within the same city or town, the local number is all you need.

For **directory assistance** in London, dial ✆ **142;** for the rest of Britain, ✆ **192.**

There are three types of **public pay phones:** those taking only coins, those accepting only phone cards (called Cardphones), and those taking both phone cards and credit cards. At coin-operated phones, insert your coins before dialing. The minimum charge is 10p (20¢).

Phone cards are available in four values—£2 ($4), £4 ($8), £10 ($20), and £20 ($40)—and are reusable until the total value has expired. Cards can be purchased from newsstands and post offices. Finally, the credit card pay phone—Access (MasterCard), Visa, American Express, and Diners Club—is most common at airports and large railway stations.

To make an **international call** from Britain, dial the international access code **(00),** then the country code, then the area code, and finally the local number. Or call through one of the following long-distance access codes: **AT&T USA Direct** (✆ 1800/CALL-ATT [2255-288]), **Canada Direct** (✆ 0800/890016), **Australia** (✆ 0800/890061), and **New Zealand** (✆ 0800/890064). Common country codes are: USA and Canada, **1;** Australia, **61;** New Zealand, **64;** and South Africa, **27.**

For calling **collect** or if you need an international operator, dial ✆ **155.**

Caller beware: Some hotels routinely add outrageous surcharges onto phone calls made from your room. Inquire before you call! It may be a lot cheaper to use your own calling-card number or to find a pay phone.

CELLPHONES

The three letters that define much of the world's wireless capabilities are GSM (Global System for Mobiles), a big, seamless network that

makes for easy cross-border cellphone use throughout England and dozens of other countries worldwide. In general reception is good. But you might need a Scriber Identity Module (SIM) card. This is a small chip specific for England that plugs you into a regional network. In the U.S., T-Mobile, AT&T Wireless, and Cingular already use this quasi-universal system—just call your provider or go online to register your phone, and you'll be able to make calls while abroad. In Canada, Microcell and some Rogers customers are GSM, and all Europeans and most Australians use GSM. Unfortunately, per-minute charges can be high—usually $1 to $1.50 in western Europe and up to $5 in many international destinations. Calls to the U.S. average 70p ($1.40) per minute.

For many, **renting** a phone is a good idea. Even worldphone owners will have to rent new phones if they're traveling to non-GSM regions. While you can rent a phone from any number of overseas sites, including kiosks at airports and at car-rental agencies, we suggest renting the phone before you leave home. North Americans can rent one before leaving home from **InTouch USA** (✆ **800/872-7626** or 703/222-7161; www.intouchglobal.com) or **RoadPost** (✆ **888/290-1616** or 905/272-5665; www.roadpost.com). InTouch will also, for free, advise you on whether your existing phone will work overseas.

Buying a phone can be economically attractive, as many nations have cheap prepaid phone systems. Once you arrive at your destination, stop by a local cellphone shop and get the cheapest package; you'll probably pay less than $100 for a phone and a starter calling card. Local calls may be as low as 10¢ per minute, and in many countries incoming calls are free.

Wilderness adventurers might consider renting a **satellite phone** *(satphone).* It's different from a cellphone in that it connects to satellites and works where there's no cellular signal or ground-based tower. You can rent satellite phones from RoadPost (see above). InTouch USA (see above) offers a wider range of satphones but at higher rates. Per-minute call charges can be even cheaper than roaming charges with a regular cellphone, but the phone itself is more expensive. Satphones are outrageously expensive to buy, so don't even think about it.

INTERNET & E-MAIL

WITH YOUR OWN COMPUTER

More and more hotels, cafes, and retailers are signing on as Wi-Fi (wireless fidelity) "hot spots." Mac owners have their own networking

technology: Apple AirPort. **T-Mobile Hotspot** (www.t-mobile.com/hotspot or www.t-mobile.co.uk) serves up wireless connections at coffee shops nationwide. **Boingo** (www.boingo.com) and **Wayport** (www.wayport.com) have set up networks in airports and high-class hotel lobbies. iPass providers (see below) also give you access to a few hundred wireless hotel lobby setups. To locate other hot spots that provide **free wireless networks** in cities in England, go to **www.jiwire.com**.

For dial-up access, most business-class hotels offer dataports for laptop modems, and a few thousand hotels in England now offer free high-speed Internet access. In addition, major Internet service providers (ISPs) have **local access numbers** around the world, allowing you to go online by placing a local call. The **iPass** network also has dial-up numbers around the world. You'll have to sign up with an iPass provider, who will then tell you how to set up your computer for your destination(s). For a list of iPass providers, go to www.ipass.com and click on "Individuals Buy Now." One solid provider is **i2roam** (✆ **866/811-6209** or 920/233-5863; www.i2roam.com).

Wherever you go, bring a **connection kit** of the right power and phone adapters, a spare phone cord, and a spare Ethernet network cable—or find out whether your hotel supplies them to guests.

WITHOUT YOUR OWN COMPUTER

To find cybercafes check **www.cybercaptive.com** and **www.cybercafe.com**. Cybercafes are found in all large U.K. cities, especially London. But they do not tend to cluster in any particular neighborhoods because of competition. They are spread out, but can be found on almost every business street in London. **easyInternet cafes** (✆ **020/7241-9000;** www.easyeverything.com) has several Great Britain locations.

Aside from formal cybercafes, most **youth hostels** and **public libraries** have Internet access. Avoid **hotel business centers** unless you're willing to pay exorbitant rates.

Most major airports now have **Internet kiosks** scattered throughout their gates. These give you basic Web access for a per-minute fee that's usually higher than cybercafe prices.

7 Getting There

BY PLANE

The major airport for arrivals from North America is **Heathrow** (LHR) outside London. This is the hub of most airlines, including

British Airways and American carriers, and has the best transportation links to London. **Gatwick** (LGW) is the second major airport outside London, but it is much farther from the heart of the city, requiring longer and often more expensive hauls into the city.

Chances are you will not land at London's minor airports, certainly not if you're making a transatlantic crossing; however, you might land at one of these airports if you're winging in from the Continent. They include **Stansted** (STN), **London City** (LCY), **London Luton** (LTN), and **London Southend** (SEN).

THE CARRIERS

British Airways (✆ **800/247-9297;** www.britishairways.com) offers flights from 19 U.S. cities to Heathrow and Gatwick airports, as well as many others to Manchester. Nearly every flight is nonstop. With more add-on options than any other airline, British Airways can make a visit to Britain cheaper than you may have expected. Ask about packages that include both airfare and discounted hotel accommodations in Britain.

Known for consistently offering excellent fares, **Virgin Atlantic Airways** (✆ **800/821-5438;** www.virgin-atlantic.com) flies daily to either Heathrow or Gatwick from Boston, Newark, New York's JFK, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Washington's Dulles, Miami, Orlando, and Las Vegas.

American Airlines (✆ **800/433-7300;** www.aa.com) offers daily flights to Heathrow from half a dozen U.S. gateways—New York's JFK, Chicago, Boston, Miami, Los Angeles, and Dallas.

Depending on the day and season, **Delta Air Lines** (✆ **800/221-1212;** www.delta.com) runs either one or two daily nonstop flights between Atlanta and Gatwick. Delta also offers nonstop daily service from Cincinnati.

Northwest Airlines (✆ **800/225-2525** or 800/447-4747; www.nwa.com) flies nonstop from Minneapolis and Detroit to Gatwick.

Continental Airlines (✆ **800/231-0856;** www.continental.com) has daily flights to London from Cleveland, Houston, Newark, Orlando, and San Francisco.

United Airlines (✆ **800/241-6522;** www.united.com) flies nonstop from New York's JFK and Chicago to Heathrow two or three times daily, depending on the season. United also offers nonstop service from Dulles Airport, near Washington, D.C.; Newark; Los Angeles; and San Francisco.

For travelers departing from Canada, **Air Canada** (✆ **888/247-2262;** www.aircanada.com) flies daily to London's Heathrow

nonstop from Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto. There are also frequent direct flights from Calgary, Ottawa, and St. John's. **British Airways** (✆ **800/247-9297**) has direct flights from Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver.

For travelers departing from Australia, **British Airways** (✆ **1300/767-177**) has flights to London from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, and Brisbane. **Qantas** (✆ **612/131313;** www.qantas.com) offers flights from Australia to London's Heathrow. Direct flights depart from Sydney and Melbourne. Some have the bonus of free stopovers in Bangkok or Singapore.

Departing from New Zealand, **Air New Zealand** (✆ **800/262-1234** in the U.S., or 0800/737-000 in New Zealand; www.airnz.co.nz) has direct flights to London from Auckland. These flights depart daily.

Short flights from Dublin to London are available through **British Airways** (✆ **800/247-9297**), with four flights daily into London's Gatwick airport, and **Aer Lingus** (✆ **800/IRISH-AIR** [47474-247]; www.aerlingus.com), which flies into Heathrow. Short flights from Dublin to London are also available through **Ryan Air** (✆ **35301/249-7791;** www.ryanair.com) and **British Midland** (✆ **0870/6070555;** www.flybmi.com).

8 Neighborhoods in Brief

While **Central London** doesn't formally define itself, most Londoners today would probably accept The Underground's Circle Line as a fair boundary.

The City (the financial district) is where London began; it's the original square mile that the Romans called *Londinium,* and it still exists as its own self-governing entity. Rich in historical, architectural, and social interest, the City is one of the world's great financial areas. Even though the City is jeweled with historic sights, it empties out in the evenings and on weekends, and there are lots of better places to stay if you are looking for a hopping nightlife scene.

The West End, where most of London's main attractions are found, is unofficially bounded by the Thames to the south, Farringdon Road/Street to the east, Marylebone Road/Euston Road to the north, and Hyde Park and Victoria Station to the west. Most visitors will spend their time in The West End, whether at Buckingham Palace, the British Museum, or the shops and theaters of Soho. You'll find the greatest concentration of hotels and restaurants in The West End. Despite attempts to extend central London's nocturnal life to the south side of the Thames(notably the ambitious South Bank Arts

Centre—London's energy fades when it crosses the river. Still, the new urban development of Docklands, the tourist attraction of the new Globe Theatre, and some up-and-coming residential neighborhoods are infusing energy into the area across the river.

Farther west are the upscale neighborhoods of Belgravia, Kensington, Knightsbridge, Chelsea, Paddington and Bayswater, Earl's Court, and Notting Hill. This is also prime hotel and restaurant territory. To the east of the City is the **East End,** which forms the eastern boundary of **Inner London** (Notting Hill and Earl's Court roughly form the western boundary). Inner London is surrounded, like a doughnut, by the sprawling hinterland of **Outer London.**

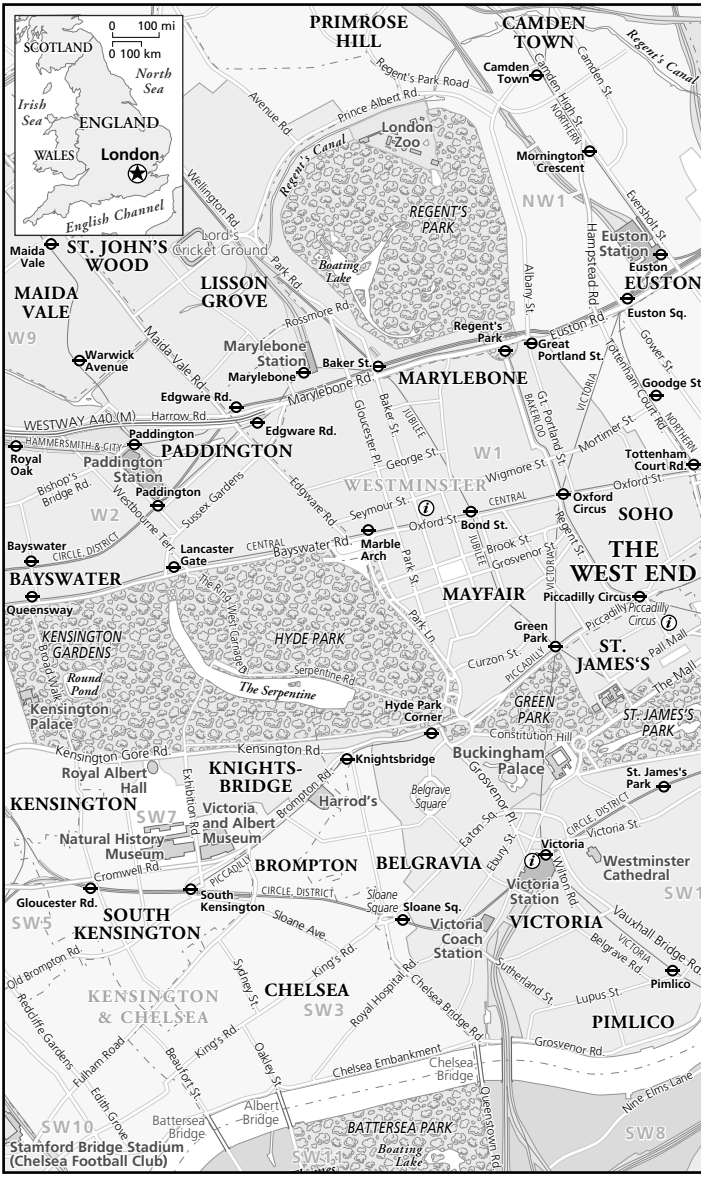
The City & Environs

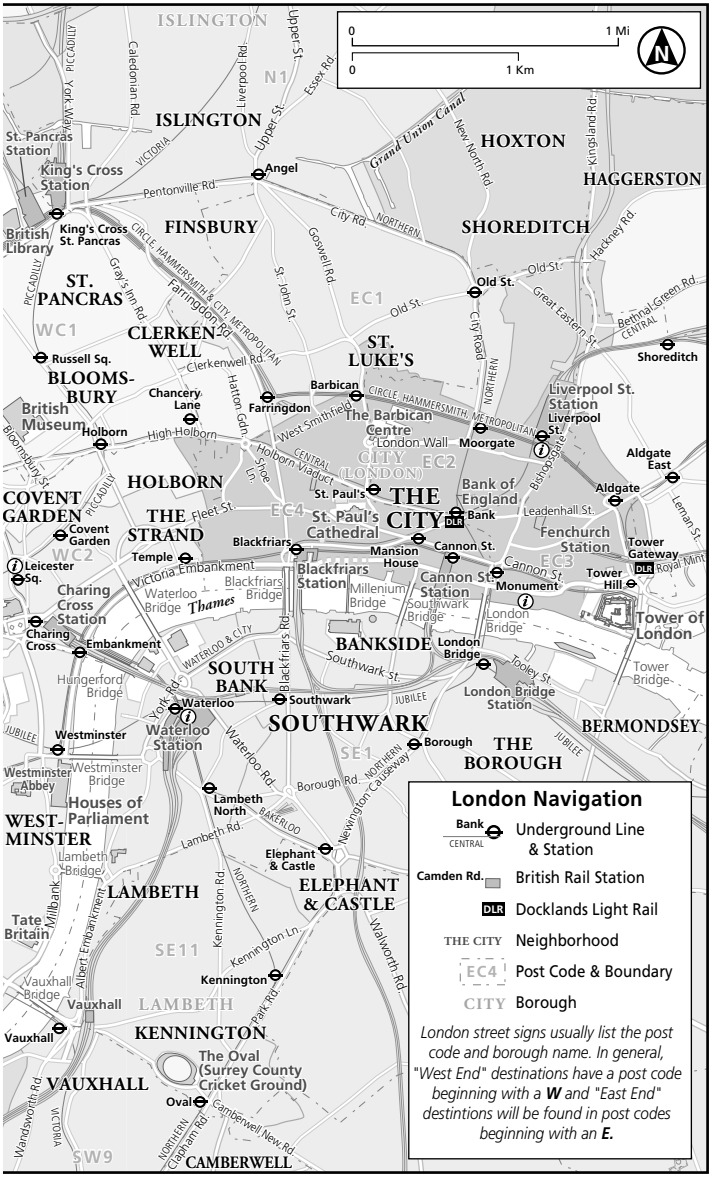
The City When Londoners speak of "the City" (EC2, EC3), they mean the original square mile that's now the British version of Wall Street. The buildings of this district are known all over the world: the Bank of England, the London Stock Exchange, and famed insurance company Lloyd's of London. The City was the original site of *Londinium,* the first settlement of the Roman conquerors. Despite its age, the City doesn't easily reveal its past. Although it retains some of its medieval character, much of the City has been swept away by the Great Fire of 1666, the bombs of 1940, the IRA bombs of the 1990s, and the zeal of modern developers. Landmarks include Sir Christopher Wren's masterpiece, **St. Paul's Cathedral,** which stood virtually alone in the surrounding rubble after the Blitz. Some 2,000 years of history unfold at the City's **Museum of London** and at the **Barbican Centre,** opened by Queen Elizabeth in 1982.

Following the Strand eastward from Trafalgar Square, you'll come to Fleet Street. In the 19th century, this corner of London became the most concentrated newspaper district in the world. William Caxton printed the first book in English here, and the *Daily Consort,* the first daily newspaper printed in England, was launched at Ludgate Circus in 1702. In recent times, however, most London tabloids have abandoned Fleet Street for the Docklands across the river. Where the Strand becomes Fleet Street stands Temple Bar, where the actual City of London begins. The Tower of London looms at the eastern fringe of the City, shrouded in legend, blood, and history, and permanently besieged by battalions of visitors.

The average visitor will venture into the City during the day to sample its attractions or to lunch at pubs such as **Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese,** then return to The West End for evening amusement. As a hotel district, the City wasn't even on the map

Central London Neighborhoods

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THE STRAND
EC4
THE CITY
WC2
SOUTH BANK
BANKSIDE
SOUTHWARK
SE1
THE BOROUGH
BERMONDSEY
LAMBETH
ELEPHANT & CASTLE
SE11
KENNINGTON
VAUXHALL
SW9
CAMBERWELL
WEST-MINSTER
King's Cross Station
St. Pancras Station
British Library
Angel
Russell Sq.
Chancery Lane
Farringdon
Barbican
The Barbican Centre
Liverpool St. Station
Old St.
Moorgate
Shoreditch
Aldgate East
Aldgate
British Museum
Holborn
St. Paul's
Bank of England
Bank
Leadenhall St.
Fenchurch Street
Tower Gateway
Tower Hill
Monument
Leicester Sq.
Temple
Blackfriars
Mansion House
Cannon St.
Cannon St. Station
Charing Cross Station
Embankment
Waterloo Bridge
Blackfriars Bridge
Blackfriars Station
Millenium Bridge
Southwark Bridge
London Bridge
Tower of London
Hungerford Bridge
Waterloo
Southwark
London Bridge
London Bridge Station
Tower Bridge
Westminster
Waterloo Station
Borough
Westminster Abbey
Houses of Parliament
Lambeth North
Elephant & Castle
Lambeth Bridge
Tate Britain
Millbank
Vauxhall Bridge
Vauxhall
Kennington
The Oval (Surrey County Cricket Ground)
Oval
Grand Union Canal
New North Rd
Upper St.
Essex Rd.
Liverpool Rd.
Caledonian Rd.
Pentonville Rd.
City Rd.
Goswell Rd.
St. John St.
Old St.
Great Eastern St.
Hackney Rd.
Kingsland Rd.
Bethnal Green Rd.
Gray's Inn Rd.
Farringdon Rd.
Clerkenwell Rd.
Hatton Gdn.
High Holborn
West Smithfield
Holborn Viaduct
Shoe Ln.
Bishopsgate
Leman St.
Fleet St.
Victoria Embankment
Waterloo & City
Blackfriars Rd.
Southwark St.
Tooley St.
York Rd.
Jubilee
Waterloo Rd.
Borough Rd.
Newington Causeway
Lambeth Rd.
Kennington Rd.
Kennington Ln.
Walworth Rd.
Albert Embankment
Park Rd.
Camberwell New Rd.
Clapham Rd.
Wandsworth Rd.
Victoria
Piccadilly
York Way
Victoria
Circle, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan
Northern
Central
Jubilee
Baker Loo
Docklands Light Railway
London Navigation
Bank
Central
Underground Line & Station
Camden Rd.
British Rail Station
DLR
Docklands Light Rail
THE CITY
Neighborhood
EC4
Post Code & Boundary
CITY
Borough
London street signs usually list the post code and borough name. In general, "West End" destinations have a post code beginning with a W and "East End" destintions will be found in post codes beginning with an E.

until recent times. The opening of the **Great Eastern Hotel** has brought a lot of business clients who prefer to stay here to avoid the traffic jams involved in getting into and out of the City. Stay in the City if you would prefer a hotel in a place like New York's Wall Street instead of a midtown address. If you can't afford the Great Eastern, consider the cheaper **Rookery** in newly fashionable Smithfield. The City lures hotel guests who prefer its quirky, quiet, offbeat flavor at night, when it's part ghost town, part movie set. There is some nightlife here, including pubs and restaurants. It's fun to wander the area when all the crowds are gone, pondering the thought that you're walking the same streets Samuel Johnson trod so long ago.

The City of London still prefers to function on its own, separate from the rest of London. It maintains its own **Information Centre** at St. Paul's Churchyard, EC4 (✆ **020/7332-1456**), which is open daily from 10am to 5:50pm.

The East End Traditionally, this was one of London's poorest districts, nearly bombed out of existence during World War II. In the words of one commentator, Hitler created "instant urban renewal" here. The East End extends east from the City Walls, encompassing Stepney, Bow, Poplar, West Ham, Canning Town, and other districts. The East End is the home of the cockney. To be a true cockney, it's said that you must be born within the sound of the Bow Bells of **St. Mary-le-Bow** church, an old church rebuilt by Sir Christopher Wren in 1670.

These days, many immigrants to London make their homes in the East End. London is pushing eastward, and the East End may even become fashionable someday soon. Today you'll find lots of trendy bars, clubs, restaurants, and boutiques or vintage clothing outlets. Much of the fashionable life is found around Hoxton Square and its peripheries, such as Shoreditch and the northern half of Brick Lane. There is an array of contemporary galleries in the area. Brick Lane, incidentally, is a great place for some curry dishes if you can deal with all those waiters on the street trying to hustle you into their restaurants. Attractions you may want to visit if you're in the area include St. Clement Danes church, the Temple of Mithras, and Sir Christopher Wren's Monument to the Great Fire of 1666.

Docklands In 1981, in the most ambitious scheme of its kind in Europe, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was formed to redevelop Wapping, the Isle of Dogs, the Royal Docks, and Surrey Docks. The area is bordered roughly by Tower Bridge to the west and London City Airport and the Royal

Docks to the east. Many businesses have moved here; Thames-side warehouses have been converted to Manhattan-style lofts and museums, entertainment complexes, shops, and an ever-growing list of restaurants have popped up at this 21st-century river city in the making.

Canary Wharf, on the Isle of Dogs, is the heart of Docklands. This 28-hectare (69-acre) site is dominated by a 240m-high (787-ft.) tower, which is the tallest building in the United Kingdom, and was designed by César Pelli. The Piazza of the tower is lined with shops and restaurants. On the south side of the river at Surrey Docks, Sir Terence Conran has converted the Victorian warehouses of Butler's Wharf into offices, workshops, houses, shops, and restaurants. Butler's Wharf is also home to the **Design Museum.** Chances are, you'll venture here for sights and restaurants, not for lodging, unless you've got business in the area. The area is fun during the day and home to some of London's finest restaurants, offering good food and a change of pace from The West End—this is postmillennium London, whereas The West End is the essence of tradition. See our recommendations in chapter 3, "Where to Dine." To get to Docklands, take The Underground to Tower Hill and pick up the **Docklands Light Railway** (✆ **020/7222-1234**), which operates Monday to Saturday from 5:30am to 12:30am, from 7am to 11:30pm Sunday.

South Bank Although not officially a district, this is where you'll find the **South Bank Arts Centre,** the largest arts center in western Europe and still growing. Reached by Waterloo Bridge (or on foot by Hungerford Bridge), it lies across the Thames from the Victoria Embankment. Culture buffs flock to its galleries and halls, which encompass the **National Theatre, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Royal Festival Hall,** and the **Hayward Gallery.**

Although its day as a top hotel district in London may come in a decade or so (since there's no room left in The West End), that hasn't happened yet. The South Bank is a destination for daytime adventures and for evening cultural attractions. You may want to dine here during a day's or evening's exploration of the area. See our recommendations in chapter 3, "Where to Dine."

Nearby are such neighborhoods as Elephant and Castle, and Southwark, home to **Southwark Cathedral.** To get here, take the Tube to Waterloo Station.

West End Neighborhoods

Bloomsbury This district, a world within itself, is bound roughly by Euston Road to the north, Gower Street to the west, and Clerkenwell to the east. It is, among other things, the academic

heart of London. There are three colleges in Bloomsbury, including **University College London,** the grandest and the oldest. A branch of the **University of London** is also here. Writers like Virginia Woolf, who lived in the area (it figured in her novel *Jacob's Room*), have fanned the neighborhood's reputation as a place devoted to liberal thinking, arts, and "sexual frankness." The novelist and her husband, Leonard, were unofficial leaders of a group of artists and writers known as the Bloomsbury Group. However, despite its student population, Bloomsbury is a fairly staid neighborhood. The heart of Bloomsbury is **Russell Square,** whose outlying streets are lined with moderately priced to expensive hotels and B&Bs. It's a noisy but central place to stay. Most visitors come to see the **British Museum,** one of the world's greatest repositories of treasures from around the globe. The **British Telecom Tower** (1964) on Cleveland Street is a familiar landmark.

Of all the areas described so far, this is the only one that could be called a hotel district. Hotel prices have risen dramatically in the past decade but are nowhere near the levels of those in Mayfair and St. James's. Bloomsbury's hotels are comparable in price to what you'll find in Marylebone to the west. But Bloomsbury is more convenient—at its southern doorstep lie the restaurants and nightclubs of Soho, the theater district, and the markets of Covent Garden. If you stay here, it's a 5-minute Tube ride to the heart of the action of The West End.

At the western edge of Bloomsbury you'll find **Fitzrovia,** bounded by Great Portland, Oxford, and Gower streets, and reached by the Goodge Street Tube. Goodge Street, with its many shops and pubs, forms the heart of the village. Fitzrovia was once the stamping ground for writers and artists like Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis, and George Orwell, among others. The bottom end of Fitzrovia is a virtual extension of Soho, with a cluster of Greek restaurants.

Holborn The old borough of Holborn (*Ho*-burn), which abuts the City southeast of Bloomsbury, encompasses the heart of legal London—this is where you'll find the city's barristers, solicitors, and law clerks. Still Dickensian in spirit, the area preserves the Victorian author's literary footsteps in the two Inns of Court (where law students perform their apprenticeships and where barristers' chambers are located), featured in *David Copperfield,* and as the Bleeding Heart Yard of *Little Dorrit* fame. The **Old Bailey** courthouse, where judges and lawyers still wear old-fashioned wigs, has stood for English justice through the years—Fagin went to the gallows from this site in *Oliver Twist.* You might come here

for some sightseeing, perhaps quenching your thirst in a historic pub. Everything in Holborn is steeped in history. For example, as you're downing a half-pint of bitter at the **Viaduct Tavern,** 126 Newgate St. (Tube: St. Paul's), you can reflect on the fact that the pub was built over the notorious Newgate Prison.

Covent Garden & the Strand The flower, fruit, and "veg" market is long gone (since 1970), but memories of Professor Higgins and his "squashed cabbage leaf," Eliza Doolittle, linger on. **Covent Garden** contains the city's liveliest group of restaurants, pubs, and cafes outside Soho, as well as some of the city's hippest shops. The restored marketplace here, with its glass and iron roofs, has been called a magnificent example of urban recycling. London's **theater district** begins in Covent Garden and spills over into Leicester Square and Soho. Inigo Jones's **St. Paul's Covent Garden** is known as the actors' church; over the years, it has attracted everybody from Ellen Terry to Vivien Leigh. The **Theatre Royal Drury Lane** was where Charles II's mistress, Nell Gwynne, made her debut in 1665 and was also where Irish actress Dorothea Jordan caught the eye of the Duke of Clarence, later William IV. The **Strand** forms the southern border of Covent Garden. It's packed with theaters, shops, first-class hotels, and restaurants. Old pubs, **Dr. Johnson's House,** and tearooms fragrant with brewing Twinings English tea evoke memories of the rich heyday of this district as the center of London's activity. The Strand runs parallel to the Thames River, and to walk it is to follow in the footsteps of Charles Lamb, Mark Twain, Henry Fielding, James Boswell, William Thackeray, and Sir Walter Raleigh, among others. The Strand's **Savoy Theatre** helped make Gilbert and Sullivan household names.

You'll probably come here for theater or dining rather than for a hotel room. Covent Garden has few hotels (although those few are very nice). We recommend the best ones (beginning on p. 46). Expect to spend a lot for the privilege of staying in such a central zone. The Strand, of course, has always been known for its swank Savoy Hotel.

Piccadilly Circus & Leicester Square Piccadilly Circus, with its statue of Eros, is the heart and soul of London. Its traffic, neon, and jostling crowds make *circus* an apt word to describe this place. Piccadilly, which was the western road out of London, was named for the "picadil," a ruffled collar created by Robert Baker, a 17th-century tailor. If you want grandeur, retreat to the Regency promenade of exclusive shops, the **Burlington Arcade,** designed in 1819. The English gentry—tired of being mud-splashed by horses

and carriages along Piccadilly—came here to do their shopping. Some 35 shops, offering a treasure-trove of expensive goodies, await you. A bit more tawdry is **Leicester Square,** a hub of theaters, restaurants, movie palaces, and nightlife—it's London's equivalent of New York's Times Square. Leicester Square changed forever in the Victorian era, when four towering entertainment halls were opened. Over time, the old entertainment palaces changed from stage to screen; today three of them still show films. In another sign of the times, the old Café de Paris is no longer a chic cabaret—now it's a disco.

There are a few hotels here, although they're invariably expensive. Stay here if you'd want a hotel in Times Square in New York. It's convenient for those who want to be at the center of the action. The downside is the noise, congestion, and pollution.

Soho A nightclubber's paradise, Soho is a confusing grid of streets crammed with restaurants. It's a great place to visit, but you probably won't want to stay here (there aren't many hotels, anyway). These densely packed streets in the heart of The West End are famous for their cosmopolitan mix of people and trades. A decade ago, much was heard about the decline of Soho with the influx of sex shops; even the pub where Dylan Thomas used to drink himself into oblivion became a sex cinema. Since then, non-sex-oriented businesses have returned, and fashionable restaurants and shops prosper. Soho is now the heart of London's expanding gay scene.

Soho starts at Piccadilly Circus and spreads out, more or less bordered by Regent Street to the west, Oxford Street to the north, Charing Cross Road to the east, and the **theaters along Shaftesbury Avenue** to the south. Carnaby Street, a block from Regent Street, was the center of the universe in the Swinging '60s but is now a schlocky tourist trap, though a few quality stores have opened recently. Across Shaftesbury Avenue is London's **Chinatown,** centered on Gerrard Street. It's small, authentic, and packed with good restaurants. Soho's heart—featuring great delicatessens, butchers, fish stores, and wine merchants—is farther north, on Brewer, Old Compton, and Berwick streets (Berwick St. features a wonderful open-air fresh-food market). To the north of Old Compton Street, Dean, Frith, and Greek streets have fine restaurants, pubs, and clubs. The British movie industry is centered on Wardour Street. The average visitor comes to Soho to dine because many of its restaurants are convenient to the theater district. Most travelers don't stay in Soho, but a certain action-oriented visitor prefers the *joie de vivre* of the neighborhood as compared to staid

Bloomsbury or swank Mayfair. Does this sound like you? Check out Soho's accommodations, starting on p. 47.

Marylebone West of Bloomsbury and Fitzrovia, Marylebone extends north from Marble Arch, at the eastern edge of Hyde Park. Most first-time visitors head here to explore **Madame Tussaud's** waxworks or walk along **Baker Street** in the footsteps of Sherlock Holmes. The streets form a near-perfect grid, with the major ones running north-south between Regent's Park and Oxford Street. Architect Robert Adam laid out **Portland Place,** one of the most characteristic squares in London, from 1776 to 1780. At **Cavendish Square,** Mrs. Horatio Nelson waited for the return of Admiral Nelson. Marylebone Lane and High Street retain a bit of small-town atmosphere, but this is otherwise a rather anonymous area. Dickens wrote nearly a dozen books while he resided here. At **Regent's Park,** you can visit Queen Mary's Gardens or, in summer, see Shakespeare performed in an open-air theater. **Marylebone** has emerged as a major "bedroom" district for London, competing with Bloomsbury to its east. It's not as convenient as Bloomsbury, but the hub of The West End's action is virtually at your doorstep if you lodge here, northwest of Piccadilly Circus and facing Mayfair to the south. Once known only for its town houses turned into B&Bs, the district now offers accommodations in all price ranges, catering to everyone from rock stars to frugal family travelers.

Mayfair Bounded by Piccadilly, Hyde Park, and Oxford and Regent streets, this is the most elegant, fashionable section of London, filled with luxury hotels, Georgian town houses, and swank shops. The area is sandwiched between Piccadilly Circus and Hyde Park. It's convenient to London's best shopping and close to The West End theaters yet (a bit snobbily) removed from the peddlers and commerce of Covent Garden and Soho.

One of the curiosities of Mayfair is **Shepherd Market,** a village of pubs, two-story inns, restaurants, and book and food stalls, nestled within Mayfair's grandness. The hotels of Mayfair, especially those along Park Lane, are the most expensive and grand in London. This is the place if you're seeking sophisticated, albeit expensive, accommodations close to the **Bond Street** shops, boutiques, and art galleries. If "address" is important to you, and you're willing to pay for a good one, Mayfair has a bed waiting for you.

Grosvenor Square (pronounced *Grov*-nor) is nicknamed "Little America" because it's home to the American Embassy and a statue of Franklin D. Roosevelt. **Berkeley Square** (*Bark*-ley) was made famous by the song "A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square." You'll want to dip into this exclusive section at least once.

St. James's Often called "Royal London," St. James's basks in its associations with everybody from the "merrie monarch" Charles II to Elizabeth II, who lives at its most famous address, **Buckingham Palace.** The neighborhood begins at **Piccadilly Circus** and moves southwest, incorporating **Pall Mall,** the **Mall, St. James's Park,** and **Green Park.** It's "frightfully convenient," as the English say; within its confines are American Express and many of London's leading department stores. This is the neighborhood where English gentlemen seek haven at that male-only bastion of English tradition, the gentlemen's club, where poker is played, drinks are consumed, and pipes are smoked (St. James's Club is one of the most prestigious of these institutions). Be sure to stop in at **Fortnum & Mason,** 181 Piccadilly, the world's most luxurious grocery store. Launched in 1788, the store sent hams to the Duke of Wellington's army and baskets of tinned goodies to Florence Nightingale in the Crimea. Hotels in this neighborhood tend to be expensive, but if the Queen should summon you to Buckingham Palace, you won't have far to go.

Westminster Westminster has been the seat of the British government since the days of Edward the Confessor (1042–66). Dominated by the **Houses of Parliament** and **Westminster Abbey,** the area runs along the Thames to the east of St. James's Park. **Trafalgar Square,** one of the city's major landmarks, is located at the area's northern end and remains a testament to England's victory over Napoleon in 1805. The square is home to the landmark National Gallery, which is filled with glorious paintings. Whitehall is the main thoroughfare, linking Trafalgar Square with **Parliament Square.** You can visit Churchill's Cabinet War Rooms and walk by **Downing Street** to see **Number 10,** home to Britain's prime minister (though the street itself is fenced in and guarded these days). No visit is complete without a call at **Westminster Abbey,** one of the greatest Gothic churches in the world. It has witnessed a parade of English history, beginning with William the Conqueror's coronation here on Christmas Day 1066.

Westminster also encompasses **Victoria,** an area that takes its name from bustling Victoria Station, "the gateway to the Continent." Many B&Bs and hotels have sprouted up here because of the neighborhood's proximity to the rail station. Victoria is cheap and convenient if you don't mind the noise and crowds.

Welfare recipients occupy many hotels along Belgrave Road. If you've arrived without a hotel reservation, you'll find the pickings better on the streets off Belgrave Road. Your best bet is to walk along Ebury Street, east of Victoria Station and Buckingham Palace Road. Here you'll find some of the best moderately priced

lodgings in central London. Since you're near Victoria Station, the area is convenient for day trips to Oxford, Windsor, or Canterbury.

Beyond The West End

Knightsbridge One of London's most fashionable neighborhoods, Knightsbridge is a top residential, hotel, and shopping district just south of Hyde Park. **Harrods** on Brompton Road is its chief attraction. Founded in 1901, Harrods has been called "the Notre Dame of department stores." Right nearby, **Beauchamp Place** (*Bee*-cham) is one of London's most fashionable shopping streets, a Regency-era, boutique-lined street with a scattering of restaurants. Most hotels here are deluxe or first class.

Knightsbridge is one of the most convenient areas of London, ideally located if you want to head east to the theater district or the Mayfair shops, or west to Chelsea or Kensington's restaurants and attractions.

Belgravia South of Knightsbridge, this area has long been an aristocratic quarter of London, rivaling Mayfair in grandeur. Although it reached its pinnacle of prestige during the reign of Queen Victoria, the Duke and Duchess of Westminster still live at **Eaton Square,** and Belgravia remains a hot area for chic hotels. The neighborhood's centerpiece is **Belgrave Square.** When town houses were built from 1825 to 1835, aristocrats followed—the Duke of Connaught, the Earl of Essex, and even Queen Victoria's mother.

Belgravia is a tranquil district. If you lodge here, no one will ever accuse you of staying on the "wrong side of the tracks." The neighborhood is convenient to the little restaurants and pubs of Chelsea, which is located to Belgravia's immediate west. Victoria Station is located to its immediate east, so Belgravia is convenient if you're planning to take day trips from London.

Chelsea This stylish Thames-side district lies south and to the west of Belgravia. It begins at **Sloane Square,** with **Gilbert Ledward's Venus fountain** playing watery music. The area has always been a favorite of writers and artists, including Oscar Wilde (who was arrested here), George Eliot, James Whistler, J. M. W. Turner, Henry James, and Thomas Carlyle (whose former home can be visited). Mick Jagger and Margaret Thatcher (not together) have been more recent residents, and the late Princess Diana and her "Sloane Rangers" (a term used to describe posh women, derived from Chelsea's Sloane Square) of the 1980s gave the area even more recognition. There are some swank hotels here and a scattering of modestly priced ones. The main drawback to Chelsea is inaccessibility. Except for Sloane Square, there's a dearth of Tube

stops, and unless you like to take a lot of buses or expensive taxis, you may find getting around a chore.

Chelsea's major boulevard is **King's Road,** where Mary Quant launched the miniskirt in the 1960s and where the English punk look began. King's Road runs the length of Chelsea; it's at its liveliest on Saturday. The outrageous fashions of the King's Road boutiques aren't typical of otherwise upmarket Chelsea, an elegant village filled with town houses and little mews dwellings that only successful stockbrokers and solicitors can afford to occupy. On the Chelsea/Fulham border is **Chelsea Harbour,** a luxury development of apartments and restaurants with a marina. You can spot its tall tower from far away; the golden ball on top moves up and down to indicate the tide level.

Kensington This Royal Borough (W8) lies west of Kensington Gardens and Hyde Park and is traversed by two of London's major shopping streets, **Kensington High Street** and **Kensington Church Street.** Since 1689, when asthmatic William III fled Whitehall Palace for Nottingham House (where the air was fresher), the district has enjoyed royal associations. In time, Nottingham House became Kensington Palace, and the royals grabbed a chunk of Hyde Park to plant their roses. Queen Victoria was born here. Kensington Palace, or "KP," as the royals say, was home to the late Princess Margaret (who had 20 rooms with a view) and is still home to Prince and Princess Michael of Kent, and the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester. Kensington Gardens is now open to the public, ever since George II decreed that "respectably dressed" people would be permitted in on Saturday—provided that no servants, soldiers, or sailors came (as you might imagine, that rule is long gone). During the reign of William III, Kensington Square developed, attracting artists and writers. Thackeray wrote *Vanity Fair* while living here. With all those royal associations, Kensington is a fashionable neighborhood. If you're a frugal traveler, head for South Kensington (see below) for moderately priced hotels and B&Bs. Southeast of Kensington Gardens and Earl's Court, primarily residential **South Kensington** is often called "museumland" because it's dominated by a complex of museums and colleges, including the **Natural History Museum, The Victoria and Albert Museum,** and the **Science Museum;** nearby is **Royal Albert Hall.** South Kensington boasts some fashionable restaurants and town-house hotels. One of the neighborhood's curiosities is the **Albert Memorial,** completed in 1872 by Sir George Gilbert Scott; for sheer excess, this Victorian monument is unequaled in the world.

A hotel room in Kensington is a prestigious address. But as Princess Margaret may have told you, you're at the far stretch of The West End, lying some 20 minutes by Tube from the heart of the theater district. As for South Kensington, it was once considered the "boondocks," although with the boundaries of The West End expanding, the neighborhood is much closer to the action than it has ever been before.

Paddington & Bayswater **Paddington** radiates out from Paddington Station, north of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. It's one of the major B&B centers in London, attracting budget travelers who fill the lodgings in Sussex Gardens and Norfolk Square. After the first railway was introduced in London in 1836, a circle of sprawling railway terminals, including Paddington Station (which was built in 1838), spurred the growth of this middle-class area. Just south of Paddington, north of Hyde Park, and abutting more fashionable Notting Hill to the west is **Bayswater,** also filled with a large number of B&Bs that attract budget travelers. Inspired by Marylebone and elegant Mayfair, a relatively prosperous set of Victorian merchants built terrace houses around spacious squares in this area.

Paddington and Bayswater are sort of "in between" areas of London. If you've come to London to see the attractions in the east, including the British Museum, the Tower of London, and the theater district, you'll find yourself commuting a lot. Stay here for moderately priced lodgings (there are expensive hotels, too) and for convenience to transportation. Rapidly gentrifying, this area ranges from seedy to swank.

On the other (north) side of Westway/Marylebone Road are **Maida Vale** and **St. John's Wood,** two villages that have been absorbed by central London. Maida Vale lies west of **Regent's Park,** north of Paddington, and next to the more prestigious St. John's Wood (home to the Beatles' Abbey Road Studios). The area is very sports-oriented; if you take the Tube to Maida Vale, you'll find Paddington Recreation Ground, plus a smaller "green lung" called Paddington Bowling and Sports Club. The area is also home to some of the BBC studios.

Notting Hill Increasingly fashionable Notting Hill is bounded on the east by Bayswater and on the south by Kensington. Hemmed in on the north by Westway and on the west by the Shepherd's Bush ramp leading to the M40, it has many turn-of-the-20th-century mansions and small houses sitting on quiet, leafy streets, plus a growing number of hot restaurants and clubs.

Gentrified in recent years, it's becoming an extension of central London. Hotels are few, but increasingly chic.

Even more remote than Paddington and Bayswater, Notting Hill lies at least another 10 minutes west of those districts. In spite of that, many young professional visitors to London wouldn't stay anywhere else.

In the northern half of Notting Hill is the hip neighborhood known as **Notting Hill Gate,** home to Portobello Road, which boasts one of London's most famous street markets. The area Tube stops are Notting Hill Gate, Holland Park, and Ladbroke Grove.

Nearby **Holland Park,** an expensive residential neighborhood, promotes itself as "10 minutes by Tube from practically anywhere," a bit of an exaggeration.

9 Getting Around

ARRIVING BY PLANE

LONDON HEATHROW AIRPORT West of London in Hounslow (✆ **0870/000-0123;** www.baa.co.uk), Heathrow is one of the world's busiest airports. It has four terminals, each relatively self-contained. Terminal 4, the most modern, handles the long-haul and transatlantic operations of British Airways. Most transatlantic flights on U.S.-based airlines arrive at Terminal 3. Terminals 1 and 2 receive the intra-European flights of several European airlines.

Getting to Central London from Heathrow It takes 45 to 50 minutes by The Underground (Tube) and costs £4 ($8) to make the 24km (15-mile) trip from Heathrow to the center of London. A taxi is likely to cost from £50 to £70 ($100–$140). For more information about Tube or bus connections, call ✆ **020/7222-1234** or go to **www.tfl.gov.uk**.

The British Airport Authority now operates **Heathrow Express** (✆ **0845/600-1515;** www.heathrowexpress.com), a 161kmph (100-mph) train service running every 15 minutes daily from 5:10am until 11:40pm between Heathrow and Paddington Station in the center of London. Trips cost £15 ($30) each way in economy class, rising to £46 ($92) in first class. Children 14 and younger pay £7.20 ($14) in economy, £23 ($46) in first class. You can save £1 ($2) by booking online or by phone. The trip takes 15 minutes each way between Paddington and Terminals 1, 2, and 3; 23 minutes from Terminal 4. The trains have special areas for wheelchairs. From Paddington, passengers can connect to other trains and The Underground, or you can hail a taxi. You can buy tickets on the train with

a £2 ($4) surcharge, or at self-service machines at Heathrow Airport. (Tickets are also available from travel agents.)

GATWICK AIRPORT While Heathrow still dominates, more and more scheduled flights land at relatively remote **Gatwick** (✆ **0870/574-7777;** www.baa.co.uk), located some 40km (25 miles) south of London in West Sussex but only a 30-minute train ride away.

Getting to Central London from Gatwick From Gatwick, the fastest way to get to London is via the **Gatwick Express trains** (✆ **0845/850-1530;** www.gatwickexpress.co.uk), which depart approximately every 15 minutes, daily between 4:35am and 1:35am. The round-trip fare between Gatwick and Victoria Rail Station is £27 ($54) for adults and £13 ($26) for children age 10 and younger. (One-way fares cost £16/$32 for adults and £7.95/$16 for children.) The travel time each way is 30 minutes Monday to Saturday, and 35 minutes on Sunday.

A **taxi** from Gatwick Airport to central London costs from £95 ($190). Fares vary according to a printed price list that defines the fare from Gatwick to whichever neighborhood of London you're traveling to. Meters in this case don't apply because Gatwick lies outside the Metropolitan Police District. For further transportation information pertaining to either Gatwick or any other location within London, call ✆ **020/7222-1234.**

LONDON CITY AIRPORT Positioned 5km (3 miles) east of the bustling business community of Canary Wharf, the Docklands, and the ExCel convention center, the viability of **London City Airport** (✆ **020/7646-0088;** www.londoncityairport.com) has rendered commutes from other parts of Britain and parts of continental Europe faster and more convenient than equivalent flights into Heathrow, Gatwick, or Stansted. Accepting flights from 23 cities throughout western Europe and Scandinavia, it services airlines that include British Airways, Cirrus Airlines, Luxair, KLM, CityJet, OLT, Lufthansa, Scot Airways, Air France, Eastern Airways, SAS, Darwin Airlines, Swiss International Airlines, and VLM.

Trains on the Docklands Light Railway make runs at 10-minute intervals from City Airport to The Underground station known as "Bank" (short for "Bank of England") in the heart of London's financial district, which is known locally as "The City." One-way passage costs £4 ($8) for adults and £1 ($2) for children 15 and younger.

As a final means of getting from the airport to central London, consider boarding London Transport's bus no. 473 or 474, which makes frequent runs between the airport and various points in East London,

Tips Getting from One London Airport to the Other

Some visitors will need to transfer from one airport to the other. One bus company offers these transfers. **National Express** (✆ **020/8593-771** or 0870/574-7777; www.nationalexpress.com) buses leave from both terminals at Gatwick and Terminals 1, 3, and 4 at Heathrow. Trip time is about an hour, with a one-way fare costing £20 ($40).

including the Plaistow Tube (Underground) station. From here, you can make connections to virtually any other point in London.

LONDON STANSTED AIRPORT Located some 80km (50 miles) northeast of London's West End, **Stansted,** in Essex (✆ **0870/000-0303;** www.baa.co.uk), handles mostly flights to and from the European continent.

Getting to Central London from Stansted From Stansted, your best bet to central London is the **Stansted Express train** (✆ **08457/484950;** www.stanstedexpress.co.uk) to Liverpool Street Station, which runs every 15 minutes from 6am to 11:45pm and every 30 minutes in the early mornings on weekends. It costs £15 ($30) for a standard ticket and £24 ($48) for first class, and takes 45 minutes.

By bus, you can take the **A6 Airbus** (✆ **0870/580-8080**), which runs regular departures 24 hours a day to many central London locations and costs £15 ($30). If you prefer the relative privacy of a taxi, you'll pay dearly for the privilege. For a ride to London's West End, a taxi will charge from £85 to £100 ($170–$200). Expect the ride to take around 75 minutes during normal traffic conditions, but beware of Friday afternoons when dense traffic may double your travel time. Our advice: Stick to the Express.

BY TRAIN

Each of London's train stations is connected to the city's vast bus and Underground network, and each has phones, restaurants, pubs, luggage storage areas, and Transport for London Information Centres.

St. Pancras International (http://stpancras.eurostar.com) is the new London hub for Eurostar, replacing Waterloo Station as the arrival point from the Continent. Restored and opened in 2007, it is the point where the high-speed Eurostar pulls into London, connecting England with Belgium and France through the Channel Tunnel.

The station boasts Europe's longest champagne bar, a daily farmer's market, all the Wi-Fi you'll ever need, plus dozens of boutiques—and some of the world's fastest trains. It is also served by six Underground (the Tube) branches, including Victoria, Northern, Piccadilly, Circle, Hammersmith & City, and Metropolitan, as well as seven other rail companies. With such a vast network of transport, you can head virtually anywhere in Greater London.

BY PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The London Underground and the city's buses operate on the same system of six fare zones. The fare zones radiate in rings from the central zone 1, which is where most visitors spend the majority of their time. Zone 1 covers the area from Liverpool Street in the east to Notting Hill in the west, and from Waterloo in the south to Baker Street, Euston, and King's Cross in the north. To travel beyond zone 1, you need a multizone ticket. Note that all single one-way, round-trip, and 1-day pass tickets are valid only on the day of purchase. Tube and bus maps should be available at any Underground station. You can download them before your trip from the excellent **London Transport (LT)** website **www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl**. There are also **LT Information Centres** at several major Tube stations: Euston, King's Cross, Oxford Circus, St. James's Park, Liverpool Street Station, and Piccadilly Circus, as well as in the British Rail stations at Euston and Victoria and in each of the terminals at Heathrow Airport. Most of them are open daily (some close Sun) from at least 9am to 5pm. A 24-hour public-transportation information service is also available at ✆ **020/7222-1234.**

DISCOUNT PASSES If you plan to use public transportation a lot, investigate the range of fare discounts available. **Travelcards** offer unlimited use of buses, Underground, Docklands Light Railway, and National Rail services in Greater London for any period ranging from a day to a year. Travelcards are available from Underground ticket offices, LT Information Centres, main post offices in the London area, many newsagents, and some newsstands. Children 10 and younger generally travel free on the Tube and buses.

The **1-Day Travelcard** allows you to go anywhere throughout Greater London. For travel anywhere within zones 1 and 2, the cost is £6.80 ($14) for adults or £3.40 ($6.80) for children 5 to 15. The **Off-Peak 1-Day Travelcard,** which is valid after 9:30am on weekdays is even cheaper. For two zones, the cost is £5.30 ($11) for adults and £3.30 ($6.60) for children 5 to 15.

The system now features a **3-Day Travel Card,** allowing adults to travel within zones 1 and 2 for £17 to £22 ($34–$44), and allowing children to go for £8.70 to £9.50 ($17–$19).

1-Week Travelcards cost adults £24 ($48) and children £12 ($24) for travel in zones 1 and 2.

Consider purchasing the **Oyster Card** (www.oystercard.com), a travel discount card that's all the rage. You can prepay for single fares, which cost considerably less than a paper ticket—usually about half the price. Oysters are valid on the Tube, DLR, tram, and National Rail services within your chosen zones and across the entire London bus network. For 24-hour information, call the Oyster hot line at ✆ **0871/2301100.** The card has a daily price cap, meaning you never pay more than £3 ($6) regardless of how many trips you make in 1 day. You can buy an Oyster Card at any ticket office.

THE UNDERGROUND

The Underground, or Tube, is the fastest and easiest way to get around. All Tube stations are clearly marked with a red circle and blue crossbar. Routes are conveniently color-coded.

If you have British coins or a credit card, you can get your ticket at a vending machine. Otherwise, buy it at the ticket office. You can transfer as many times as you like as long as you stay in The Underground. Children 4 and younger travel free if accompanied by an adult.

Slide your ticket into the slot at the gate and pick it up as it comes through on the other side and hold on to it—it must be presented when you exit the station at your destination. If you're caught without a valid ticket, you'll be fined £20 ($40) on the spot. If you owe extra money, you'll be asked to pay the difference by the attendant at the exit. The Tube runs roughly from 5am to 12:30am (7:30am–10:30pm Sun). After that you must take a taxi or night bus to your destination. For information on the London Tube system, call the **London Underground** at ✆ **020/7222-1234,** but expect to stay on hold for a good while before a live person comes on the line. Information is also available on **www.tfl.gov.uk**.

The Jubilee Line Extension has been extended eastward to serve the growing suburbs of the southeast and the Docklands area. This east-west axis helps ease traffic on some of London's most hard-pressed underground lines. The line also makes it much easier to reach Greenwich.

BY TAXI

London cabs are among the most comfortable and best-designed in the world. You can pick one up either by heading for a cab rank or

by hailing one in the street. (The taxi is available if the yellow taxi sign on the roof is lit.) To **call a cab,** phone ✆ **0871/871-8710.**

The meter starts at £2.20 ($4.40), with increments of £2 ($4) per mile thereafter, based on distance or time. Surcharges are imposed after 8pm and on weekends and public holidays. All these tariffs include VAT: Tip 10% to 15%.

If you call for a cab, the meter starts running when the taxi receives instructions from the dispatcher, so you could find that the meter already reads a few pounds more than the initial drop of £2.20 ($4.40) when you step inside.

Minicabs are also available, and they're often useful when regular taxis are scarce or when the Tube stops running. These cabs are meterless, so you must negotiate the fare in advance. Unlike regular cabs, minicabs are forbidden by law to cruise for fares. They operate from sidewalk kiosks, such as those around Leicester Square. If you need to call one, try **Brunswick Chauffeurs/Abbey Cars** (✆ **020/8969-2555**) in west London or **Newham Minicars** (✆ **020/8472-1400**) in south London. Minicab kiosks can be found near many Tube or BritRail stops, especially in outlying areas.

If you have a complaint about taxi service or if you leave something in a cab, contact the **Public Carriage Office,** 15 Penton St., N1 9PU (Tube: Angel Station). If it's a complaint, you must have the cab number, which is displayed in the passenger compartment. Call ✆ **0845/602-7000** or 020/7222-1234 with complaints.

2

Where to Stay

With all the vast improvements and upgrades made at the turn of the 21st century, chances are, you'll like your room. What you won't like is the price. Even if a hotel remains scruffy, London hoteliers have little embarrassment about jacking up prices. Hotels in all categories remain overpriced.

London boasts some of the most famous hotels in the world—temples of luxury like Claridge's and the Dorchester, and more recent rivals like the Four Seasons. The problem is that there are too many of these high-priced hotels (and now there are many budget options) and not enough moderately priced options.

Even at the luxury level, you may be surprised at what you don't get. Many of the stately Victorian and Edwardian gems are so steeped in tradition that they lack modern conveniences standard in other luxury hotels around the world. A few have modernized with a vengeance, but others retain amenities from the Boer War era. London does have some cutting-edge, chintz-free hotels that seem to have been flown in straight from Los Angeles—complete with high-end sound systems and gadget-filled marble bathrooms. But these hotels are not necessarily superior; though they're streamlined and convenient, they frequently lack the personal service and spaciousness that characterize the grand old hotels.

With their charm, intimacy, and attention to detail, boutique hotels are an attractive alternative to larger, stuffier establishments. The "boutiquing" of the hotel scene continues—the city offers more personally run and privately operated hotels than ever. We've surveyed the best of them, concentrating on reasonably priced choices.

If you're looking for budget options, don't despair. London has some good-value places in the lower price ranges, and we've included the best of these. An affordable option is a bed-and-breakfast. The following reliable services will recommend and arrange a B&B room for you: The **London Bed and Breakfast Agency Limited** (✆ **020/7586-2768;** fax 020/7586-6567; www.londonbb.com) is a reputable agency that can provide inexpensive accommodations in selected private homes for £37 to £60 ($74–$120) per person per night, based

on double occupancy (although some accommodations will cost a lot more). **London B&B** (✆ **800/872-2632** in the U.S.; fax 619/531-1686; www.londonbandb.com) offers B&B accommodations in private family residences or unhosted apartments. Homes are inspected for quality and comfort, amenities, and convenience.

1 The West End

BLOOMSBURY

EXPENSIVE

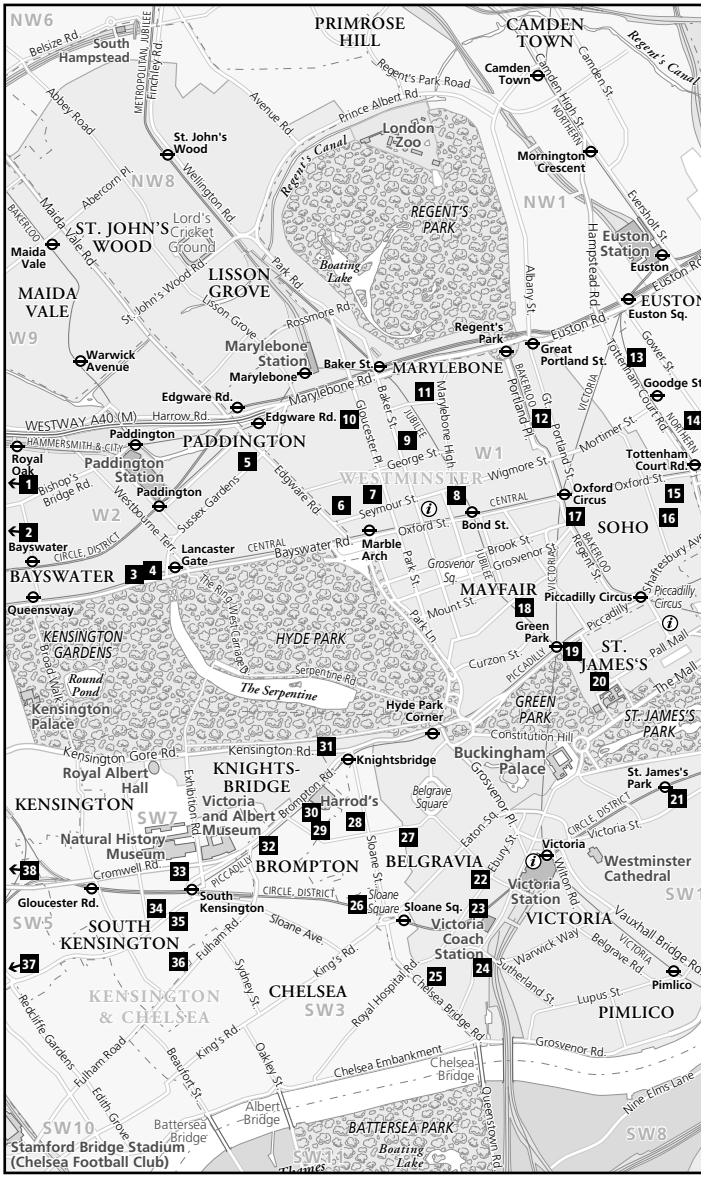
The Academy Hotel ★ The Academy is in the heart of London's publishing district. If you look out your window, you see where Virginia Woolf and other literary members of the Bloomsbury Group passed by every day. Many original architectural details were preserved when these three 1776 Georgian row houses were joined. Grace notes include glass panels, colonnades, and intricate plasterwork on the facade. With overstuffed armchairs and half-canopied beds, rooms sometimes evoke English country-house living, but that of the poorer relations. Guests who have been here before request rooms opening onto the garden in back since they are more tranquil than the front units. ***Warning:*** If you have a problem with stairs, know that no elevators rise to the four floors.

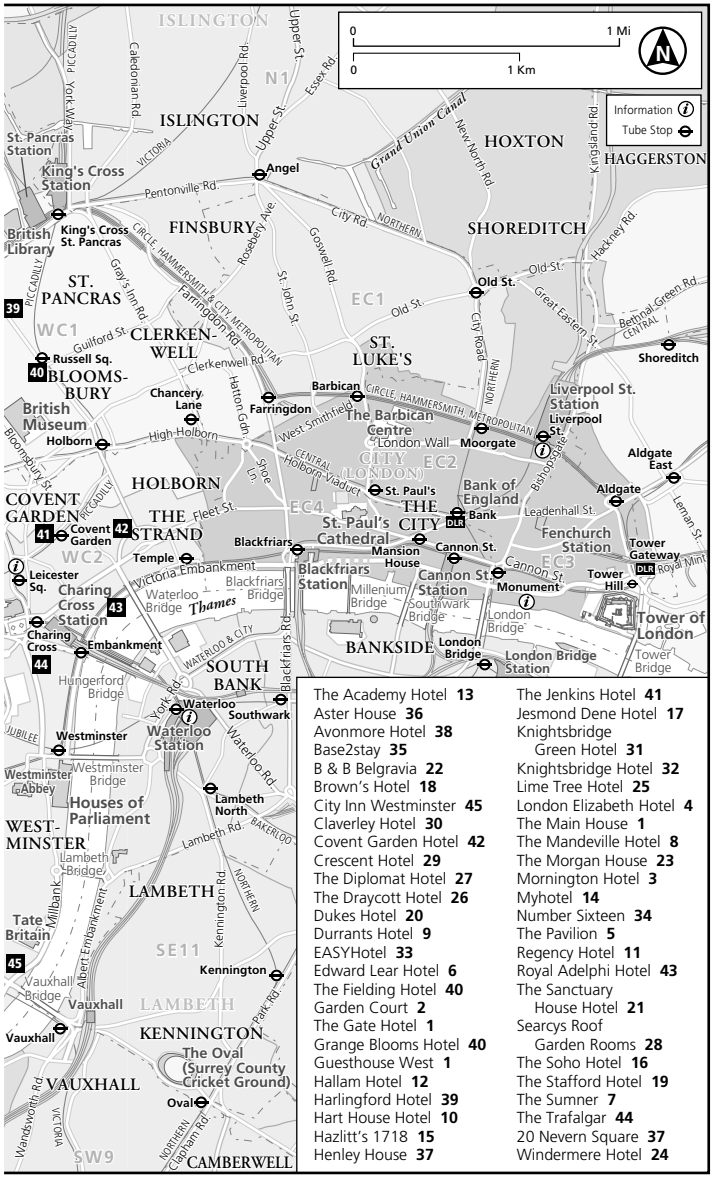
21 Gower St., London WC1E 6HG. ✆ **020/7631-4115.** Fax 020/7636-3442. www.theetoncollection.com. 49 units. £140–£165 ($280–$330) double; £180 ($360) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd., Goodge St., or Russell Sq. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, beverage maker, hair dryer, iron, trouser press, safe.

Grange Blooms Hotel ★ This restored 18th-century town house has a pedigree: It stands in what were formerly the grounds of Montague House (now the British Museum). It has had a distinguished, if eccentric, list of former occupants: everybody from Richard Penn (the Whig member of Parliament from Liverpool) to Dr. John Cumming, who firmly believed he'd witness the end of the world (on long winter nights, his ghostly presence has supposedly been spotted). Even though it's in the heart of London, the house has a country-home atmosphere, complete with fireplace, period art, and copies of *Country Life* in the magazine rack. Guests take morning coffee in a walled garden overlooking the British Museum. In summer, light meals are served. The small- to medium-size bedrooms are individually designed with traditional elegance, in beautifully muted tones.

7 Montague St., London WC1B 5BP. ✆ **020/7323-1717.** Fax 020/7636-6498. www.grangehotels.com. 26 units. £135–£160 ($270–$320) double. AE, DC, MC, V.

Where to Stay in London





The Academy Hotel **13**
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The Main House **1**
The Mandeville Hotel **8**
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Mornington Hotel **3**
Myhotel **14**
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The Pavilion **5**
Regency Hotel **11**
Royal Adelphi Hotel **43**
The Sanctuary House Hotel **21**
Searcys Roof Garden Rooms **28**
The Soho Hotel **16**
The Stafford Hotel **19**
The Sumner **7**
The Trafalgar **44**
20 Nevern Square **37**
Windermere Hotel **24**

Tube: Russell Sq. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; courtesy car; room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer, trouser press.

Myhotel *Finds* Myhotel is a London row house on the outside with an Asian *moderne*-style interior. It is designed according to feng shui principles—the ancient Chinese art of placement that utilizes the flow of energy in a space. The rooms have mirrors, but they're positioned so you don't see yourself when you first wake up—feng shui rule number one (probably a good rule, feng shui or no feng shui). Rooms are havens of comfort, taste, and tranquillity. Tipping is discouraged, and each guest is assigned a personal assistant responsible for that guest's happiness. Myhotel lies within a short walk of Covent Garden and the British Museum.

11–13 Bayley St., Bedford Sq., London WC1B 3HD. ✆ **020/7667-6000.** Fax 020/7667-6044. www.myhotels.co.uk. 78 units. £189–£265 ($378–$530) double; from £319 ($638) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd. or Goodge St. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; car at discounted rate; room service; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, beverage maker, hair dryer, trouser press (in some), safe.

MODERATE

Crescent Hotel The Crescent stands in the heart of academic London. The private square is owned by the City Guild of Skinners (who are furriers, as you might have guessed) and guarded by the University of London, whose student residential halls are across the street. You have access to the gardens and private tennis courts belonging to the Guild. The hotel owners view Crescent as an extension of their home and welcome you to its comfortably elegant Georgian surroundings, which date from 1810. Some guests have been returning for 4 decades. Bedrooms range from small singles with shared bathrooms to more spacious twin and double rooms with private bathrooms. All twins, doubles, triples, and quads have writing desks and private plumbing. Many rooms are singles, ranging in price from £49 to £54 ($98–$108) depending on the plumbing.

49–50 Cartwright Gardens, London WC1H 9EL. ✆ **020/7387-1515.** Fax 020/7383-2054. www.crescenthoteloflondon.com. 27 units, 18 with bathroom (some with shower only, some with tub and shower). £97 ($194) double with bathroom; £110 ($220) triple with bathroom; £120 ($240) family room for 4. Rates include English breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: Russell Sq., King's Cross, or Euston. **Amenities:** Use of tennis courts in Cartwright Gardens; babysitting. *In room:* TV, dataport, coffeemaker.

Harlingford Hotel *Value* This hotel comprises three town houses joined in a bewildering array of staircases and meandering hallways.

Set in the heart of Bloomsbury, it's run by a management that seems genuinely concerned about the welfare of its guests, unlike that of many neighboring hotel rivals. Double-glazed windows cut down on the street noise, and all the bedrooms are comfortable and inviting. The most comfortable rooms are on the second and third levels, but expect to climb some steep English stairs (there's no elevator). Avoid the rooms on ground level, as they are darker and have less security. You'll have use of the tennis courts in Cartwright Gardens.

61–63 Cartwright Gardens, London WC1H 9EL. ✆ **020/7387-1551.** Fax 020/7387-4616. www.harlingfordhotel.com. 43 units. £99 ($198) double; £110 ($220) triple; £115 ($230) quad. Rates include English breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: Russell Sq., King's Cross, or Euston. **Amenities:** Use of tennis courts in Cartwright Gardens. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

INEXPENSIVE

The Jenkins Hotel ★ *Value* Followers of the Agatha Christie TV series *Poirot* will recognize this Cartwright Gardens residence—it was featured in the series. The antiques are gone and the rooms are small, but some of the original charm of the Georgian house remains—enough so that the London *Mail on Sunday* proclaimed it 1 of the "10 best hotel values" in the city. All the rooms are decorated in traditional Georgian style. The location is great, near the British Museum, theaters, and antiquarian bookshops. There are some drawbacks: no lift and no reception or sitting room. But this is a place where you can settle in and feel at home.

45 Cartwright Gardens, London WC1H 9EH. ✆ **020/7387-2067.** Fax 020/7383-3139. www.jenkinshotel.demon.co.uk. 14 units. £89 ($178) double; £105 ($210) triple. Rates include English breakfast. MC, V. Tube: Russell Sq., King's Cross, or Euston. **Amenities:** Use of tennis courts in Cartwright Gardens; use of washer/dryer. *In room:* TV, fridge w/soft drinks, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

KING'S CROSS

INEXPENSIVE

Jesmond Dene Hotel Well-maintained and cozy bedrooms are found at this well-run B&B in the rapidly gentrifying area of King's Cross. For those who plan to use this terminus, this is a good, convenient choice for transportation, including Eurostar to Paris. All the small bedrooms have been refurbished and are comfortable and tasteful.

27 Argyle St., King's Cross, London WC1H 8EP. ✆ **020/7837-4654.** Fax 020/7833-1633. www.jesmonddenehotel.co.uk. 23 units, 20 with private bathroom. £60 ($120) double without bathroom; £80 ($160) double with bathroom; £85–£100 ($170–$200) triple; £120 ($240) quad. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: King's Cross. **Amenities:** Breakfast room; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, Wi-Fi.

COVENT GARDEN & THE STRAND

VERY EXPENSIVE

Covent Garden Hotel ★★★ Hot hoteliers Tim and Kit Kemp—whose flair for interior design is legendary—turned this former hospital into one of London's most charming boutique hotels in one of The West End's hippest shopping neighborhoods. *Travel + Leisure* called this hotel 1 of the 25 hottest places to stay in the *world.* It remains so. The hotel has a welcoming lobby outfitted with elaborate inlaid furniture and elegant draperies, plus a charming restaurant. Upstairs, accessible via a dramatic stone staircase, soundproof bedrooms are furnished in English style with Asian fabrics, many adorned with hand-embroidered designs. Each room has a clothier's mannequin, a female form draped in the fabric that decorates that particular room. Some guests prefer the attic rooms with their sloping ceilings and small arched windows.

10 Monmouth St., London WC2H 9HB. ✆ **800/553-6674** in the U.S., or 020/7806-1000. Fax 020/7806-1100. www.firmdale.com. 58 units. £275–£320 ($550–$640) double; £375–£995 ($750–$1,990) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Covent Garden or Leicester Sq. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; small exercise room; tour desk; business services; salon; room service; massage; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms; video library. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

MODERATE

The Fielding Hotel ★ *Finds* One of London's more eccentric hotels, this rickety walk-up is cramped, quirky, and quaint, and an enduring favorite of some. Named after novelist Henry Fielding of *Tom Jones* fame, who lived in Broad Court, the hotel lies on a pedestrian street still lined with 19th-century gas lamps. The Royal Opera House is across the street, and the pubs, shops, and restaurants of lively Covent Garden are just beyond the front door. Rooms are small but charmingly old-fashioned and traditional. Some units are redecorated or at least "touched up" every year, though floors dip and sway, and the furnishings and fabrics, though clean, have known better times. With a location like this, in the heart of London, the Fielding keeps guests coming back; in fact, some love the hotel's claustrophobic charm. Children 12 and younger are not welcome; occasionally the staff makes adult patrons feel the same.

4 Broad Court, Bow St., London WC2B 5QZ. ✆ **020/7836-8305.** Fax 020/7497-0064. www.the-fielding-hotel.co.uk. 24 units. £105–£125 ($210–$250) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Covent Garden. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker.

INEXPENSIVE

Royal Adelphi Hotel If you care most about being in a central location, consider the Royal Adelphi. Close to Covent Garden, the

theater district, and Trafalgar Square, it's an unorthodox choice away from the typical B&B stamping grounds. London has far better B&Bs, but not in this part of town. Bedrooms call to mind London's swinging 1960s heyday, and are decently maintained and comfortable, with good beds. Plumbing, however, is a bit creaky, and the lack of air-conditioning can make London feel like summer in the Australian outback during the city's few hot days.

21 Villiers St., London WC2N 6ND. ✆ **020/7930-8764.** Fax 020/7930-8735. www.royaladelphihotel.co.uk. 47 units, 34 with bathroom. £70 ($140) double without bathroom; £92 ($184) double with bathroom; £120 ($240) triple with bathroom. Rates include continental breakfast and tax. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

EXPENSIVE

The Trafalgar ★★ In the heart of landmark Trafalgar Square, this is Hilton's first boutique hotel in London. The facade of this 19th-century structure was preserved, while the guest rooms inside were refitted to modern standards. Because of the original architecture, many of the rooms are uniquely shaped and sometimes offer split-level layouts. Large windows open onto panoramic views of Trafalgar Square. The decor in the rooms is minimalist, and comfort is combined with simple luxury. The greatest view of London's cityscape is from the Hilton's rooftop garden.

2 Spring Gardens, Trafalgar Sq., London SW1A 2TS. ✆ **800/774-1500** in the U.S., or 020/7870-2900. Fax 020/7870-2911. www.thetrafalgar.com. 129 units. £259–£330 ($518–$660) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking £30 ($60). Tube: Charing Cross. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; gym; spa; courtesy car; business services; room service; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, beverage maker, hair dryer, safe.

SOHO

VERY EXPENSIVE

The Soho Hotel ★★★ A former parking garage in the heart of bustling Soho just became our favorite nest in London. When it's time to check out, we never want to leave. British hoteliers Kit and Tim Kemp have come up with a stunner here. At night we have a cocoonlike feeling entering this luxury lair in a cul-de-sac off Dean Street. The theaters of Shaftesbury are only a block or two away, as is the Ivy Restaurant. All the extremely spacious bedrooms are individually designed in granite and oak. There are four penthouses on the fifth floor with tree-lined terraces opening onto panoramic sweeps of London. The glitterati, mostly actors and filmmakers, can be seen hanging out at the bar.

4 Richmond Mews, London W1D 3DH. ✆ **020/7559-3000.** Fax 020/7559-3003. www.firmdalehotels.com. 91 units. £255–£315 ($510–$630) double; from £370 ($740) suite. AE, MC, V. Tube: Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; exercise room; gym; on-site personal trainer; salon; room service; 2 private cinemas. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

EXPENSIVE

Hazlitt's 1718 ★★ *Finds* This gem, housed in three historic homes on Soho Square, is one of London's best small hotels. Built in 1718, the hotel is named for William Hazlitt, who founded the Unitarian Church in Boston and wrote four volumes on the life of his hero, Napoleon. Hazlitt's is a favorite with artists, actors, and models. It's eclectic and filled with odds and ends picked up around the country at estate auctions. Many bedrooms have four-poster beds; some of the floors dip and sway, and there's no elevator, but it's all part of the charm. It has just as much character as the Fielding Hotel but is a lot more comfortable. Some rooms are a bit small, but most are spacious, all with state-of-the-art appointments. Accommodations in the back are quieter but perhaps too dark, and only those on the top floor have air-conditioning.

6 Frith St., London W1D 3JA. ✆ **020/7434-1771.** Fax 020/7439-1524. www.hazlittshotel.com. 23 units. £265 ($530) double; £300 ($600) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Leicester Sq. or Tottenham Court Rd. **Amenities:** Room service; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

MAYFAIR

VERY EXPENSIVE

Brown's Hotel ★★ Almost every year a hotel sprouts up trying to evoke an English country-house ambience with Chippendale and chintz; this quintessential town-house hotel watches these competitors come and go, and it always comes out on top. Brown's was founded by James Brown, a former manservant to Lord Byron, who knew the tastes of well-bred gentlemen and wanted to create a dignified, clublike place for them. He opened its doors in 1837, the same year Queen Victoria took the throne.

Brown's occupies 14 historic houses just off Berkeley Square. Its guest rooms, completely renovated, vary considerably in decor, but all show restrained taste in decoration and appointments; even the wash basins are antiques. Accommodations range in size from small to extra spacious; some suites have four-poster beds.

30 Albemarle St., London W1S 4BP. ✆ **020/7493-6020.** Fax 020/7493-9381. www.brownshotel.com. 117 units. £450 ($900) double; from £1,400 ($2,800) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Off-site parking £53 ($106). Tube: Green Park. **Amenities:** Restaurant;

bar; health club; spa; business center; room service; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

ST. JAMES'S

EXPENSIVE

Dukes Hotel ★★★ Dukes provides elegance without ostentation in what was presumably someone's "Upstairs, Downstairs" town house. Along with its nearest competitors, the Stafford and 22 Jermyn Street, it caters to those looking for charm, style, and tradition in a hotel. It's set in a quiet courtyard off St. James's Place; turn-of-the-20th-century gas lamps help put you into the proper mood before entering the front door. Each guest room is decorated in the style of a particular English period, ranging from Regency to Edwardian. It's cozier, more intimate, and more clubbish than the Stafford, and Dukes is more tranquil since it's set in its own gas-lit alley.

35 St. James's Place, London SW1A 1NY. ✆ **800/381-4702** in the U.S., or 020/7491-4840. Fax 020/7493-1264. www.dukeshotel.co.uk. 90 units. £300–£420 ($600–$840) double; from £660 ($1,320) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking £55 ($110). Tube: Green Park. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; health club; spa; tour desk; business services; room service; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

The Stafford Hotel ★★★ Famous for its American Bar, its St. James's address, and the warmth of its Edwardian decor, the Stafford is in a cul-de-sac off one of London's most centrally located and busiest neighborhoods. The Stafford competes well with Dukes for a tasteful, discerning clientele. All guest rooms are individually decorated, and many of the singles contain queen-size beds. Some deluxe units offer four-posters that will make you feel like Henry VIII. A few of the hotel's more modern accommodations, boasting king-size beds, are located in the restored stable mews across the yard. Much has been done to preserve the original style of these rooms, including preservation of the original A-beams on the upper floors. You can bet that no 18th-century horse ever slept with the electronic safes, stereo systems, and quality furnishings that these rooms feature. Units on the top floor are small.

16–18 St. James's Place, London SW1A 1NJ. ✆ **800/525-4800** in the U.S., or 020/7493-0111. Fax 020/7493-7121. www.thestaffordhotel.co.uk. 107 units. £260–£470 ($520–$940) double; from £495 ($990) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Green Park. **Amenities:** Restaurant; American bar; gym; business services; room service; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, fax, hair dryer, safe.

2 Westminster & Victoria

EXPENSIVE

City Inn Westminster Next door to Tate Britain and Parliament, this purpose-built inn is at the nexus of elite London. The lobby is graced with stone, oak, and leather chairs, and the on-site restaurant specializes in game and salmon, as befits the hotel's Scottish ownership. The best digs are the 67 City Club rooms or the 16 suites, but all units are comfortable with a fresh, light, and contemporary design. Business clients predominate during the week, but on weekends rates are often slashed to bargain prices. Ask about this when booking. Try for a guest room opening onto the Thames or else views of Parliament. Rooms are soundproof with 18 inches of concrete between each unit. You can drink and dine in the City Café restaurant and bar with its alfresco terrace; the stylish Millbank Lounge bar is a popular meeting spot at night.

30 John Islip St., London SW1P 4DD. ✆ **020/7630-1000.** Fax 020/7233-7575. www.cityinn.com. 460 units. £225 ($450) double; £265 ($530) City Club room; from £289 ($578) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Pimlico or Westminster. **Amenities:** Restaurant; 2 bars; room service; gym; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar, beverage maker, hair dryer, iron.

MODERATE

Lime Tree Hotel The Wales-born Davies family, veterans of London's B&B business, have transformed a dowdy guesthouse into a cozy hotel for budget travelers. The simply furnished bedrooms are scattered over four floors (with no elevator) of a brick town house; each has been recently refitted with new curtains and cupboards. The front rooms have small balconies overlooking Ebury Street; units in the back don't have balconies but are quieter and feature views of the hotel's small rose garden. Rooms here tend to be larger than other hotel rooms offered at similar prices, and breakfasts are generous. Six rooms come with a shower/tub combination, the rest with shower only. Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and the Houses of Parliament are within easy reach, as is Harrods. The popular Ebury Wine Bar is nearby.

135–137 Ebury St., London SW1W 9QU. ✆ **020/7730-8191.** Fax 020/7730-7865. www.limetreehotel.co.uk. 25 units. £115–£145 ($230–$290) double; £165–£180 ($330–$360) triple; £190 ($380) quad. Rates include English breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Victoria. No children 4 or under. **Amenities:** Breakfast room; all nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

Sanctuary House Hotel Only in the new London, where hotels are bursting into bloom like daffodils, would you find a hotel

so close to Westminster Abbey. And a pub hotel, no less, with rooms on the upper floors above the tavern. The building was converted by Fuller Smith and Turner, a traditional brewery in Britain. Accommodations have a rustic feel, but they have first-rate beds. Downstairs, a pub/restaurant, part of the Sanctuary, offers old-style British meals. "We like tradition," one staff member told us. "Why must everything be trendy? Some people come to England nostalgic for the old. Let others be trendy." Actually, the food is excellent if you appreciate the roast beef, Welsh lamb, and Dover sole that pleased the palates of Churchill and his contemporaries. Naturally, there's always plenty of brew on tap.

33 Tothill St., London SW1H 9LA. ✆ **020/7799-4044.** Fax 020/7799-3657. www.fullershotels.com. 34 units. £99–£175 ($198–$350) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: St. James's Park. **Amenities:** Restaurant; pub; room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C, TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, trouser press.

Windermere Hotel ★ *Value* This award-winning small hotel is an excellent choice near Victoria Station. The Windermere was built in 1857 as a pair of private dwellings on the old Abbot's Lane linking Westminster Abbey to its abbot's residence—all the kings of medieval England trod here. A fine example of early Victorian classical design, the hotel has lots of English character. All rooms contain a private bathroom—some with shower, others with tub bathrooms—and come in a wide range of sizes, some accommodating three or four lodgers. The ground-floor rooms facing the street tend to be noisy at night, so avoid them if you're a light sleeper.

142–144 Warwick Way, London SW1V 4JE. ✆ **020/7834-5163.** Fax 020/7630-8831. www.windermere-hotel.co.uk. 20 units. £119–£139 ($238–$278) double; £159 ($318) family room. Rates include English breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: Victoria. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; all nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe.

INEXPENSIVE

The Morgan House This Georgian house has a convenient address, but its rooms are often fully booked in summer. Morgan's finest feature is a small courtyard open to guests. Many rooms are small to midsize, while others are large enough to house up to four people. Guest rooms are individually decorated and have orthopedic mattresses. Hallway bathrooms are well maintained and adequate for guests who don't have their own private facilities. A hearty English breakfast is served in a bright, cheerful room.

120 Ebury St., London SW1W 9QQ. ✆ **020/7730-2384.** Fax 020/7730-8442. www.morganhouse.co.uk. 11 units, 4 with private bathroom. £72 ($144) double without

bathroom; £92 ($184) double with bathroom; £92 ($184) triple without bathroom; £112 ($224) triple with bathroom; £132 ($264) family room with bathroom. Rates include English breakfast. MC, V. Tube: Victoria. **Amenities:** Breakfast room. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, phone only for receiving calls, Wi-Fi.

3 Knightsbridge to South Kensington

KNIGHTSBRIDGE

EXPENSIVE

Aster House ★★★ *Value* This is the winner of the 2004 London Tourism Award for best B&B in London, and it's just as good now as it was then. Within an easy walk of Kensington Palace and the museums of South Kensington, it's a friendly, inviting, and well-decorated lodging on a tree-lined street. The area surrounding the hotel, Sumner Place, looks like a Hollywood stage set of Victorian London. Aster House guests eat breakfast in a sunlit conservatory and can feed the ducks in the pond outside. Since the B&B is a Victorian building spread across five floors, each unit is unique in size and shape. Rooms range from spacious to Lilliputian. Some beds are draped with fabric tents for extra drama, and each room is individually decorated in the style of an English manor-house bedroom.

3 Sumner Place, London SW7 3EE. ✆ **020/7581-5888.** Fax 020/7584-4925. www.asterhouse.com. 14 units. £165–£225 ($330–$450) double. Rates include buffet breakfast. MC, V. Tube: South Kensington. **Amenities:** Breakfast room; lounge; laundry service; dry cleaning; all nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Claverley Hotel ★ Located on a quiet cul-de-sac, this tasteful hotel, one of the neighborhood's very best, is just a few blocks from Harrods. It's a small, cozy place accented with Georgian-era accessories. The lounge has the atmosphere of a country house, and complimentary tea, coffee, and biscuits are served all day in the Reading Room. Most bedrooms have wall-to-wall carpeting and comfortably upholstered armchairs, and some open unto balconies. The rooms have a marble bathroom and power shower, and are individually decorated, some with four-poster beds.

13–14 Beaufort Gardens, London SW3 1PS. ✆ **800/747-0398** in the U.S., or 020/7589-8541. Fax 020/7584-3410. www.claverleyhotel.co.uk. 29 units. £99–£254 ($198–$508) double. Rates include English breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking £30 ($60) nearby. Tube: Knightsbridge. **Amenities:** Lounge; laundry service; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

Knightsbridge Green Hotel ★ Repeat guests from around the world view this dignified 1890s structure as their home away from home. The building retains its wide baseboards, cove moldings, high

ceilings, and spacious proportions. Even without kitchens, the well-furnished suites come close to apartment-style living. Most rooms are spacious, with adequate storage space. Bedrooms are decorated with custom-made colors and are often individualized—one has a romantic sleigh bed. This is a solid choice for lodging, just around the corner from Harrods.

159 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7PD. ✆ **020/7584-6274.** Fax 020/7225-1635. www.thekghotel.co.uk. 28 units. £150–£175 ($300–$350) double; from £175 ($350) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Knightsbridge. **Amenities:** Limited room service; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning. *In room:* A/C, TV, beverage maker, hair dryer, trouser press, safe.

Knightsbridge Hotel ★★ *Value* The Knightsbridge Hotel attracts visitors from all over the world seeking a small, comfortable hotel in a high-rent district. It's fabulously located between fashionable Beauchamp Place and Harrods, with many of the city's top theaters and museums close at hand. Built in the early 1800s as a private town house, this place sits on a tranquil, tree-lined square, free from traffic. Two of London's premier hoteliers, Kit and Tim Kemp, have gone more affordable with a revamp of this. All the Kemp "cult classics" are found here, including such *luxe* touches as granite-and-oak bathrooms, the Kemps' famed honor bar, and Frette linens. Most bedrooms are spacious and furnished with traditional English fabrics. The best rooms are nos. 311 and 312, each with a pitched ceiling and a small sitting area.

10 Beaufort Gardens, London SW3 1PT. ✆ **020/7584-6300.** Fax 020/7584-6355. www.firmdalehotels.com. 44 units. £195–£280 ($390–$560) double; from £330 ($660) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Knightsbridge. **Amenities:** Self-service bar; room service; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning. *In room:* TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe.

Searcys Roof Garden Rooms ★ *Finds* Searcy's, one of London's best catering firms, operates this recycled surprise: an old pumping station that has been turned into a hotel that's only a hop, skip, and a jump from Harrods and the boutiques of Sloane Street. At this Knightsbridge oasis, you press a buzzer and are admitted to a freight elevator that carries you to the third floor. Upstairs, you'll encounter handsomely furnished rooms with antiques, tasteful fabrics, comfortable beds (some with canopies), and often a sitting alcove. Some of the bathtubs are placed right in the room instead of in a separate unit. Check out the rooftop garden.

30 Pavilion Rd., London SW1X 0HJ. ✆ **020/7584-4921.** Fax 020/7823-8694. www.30pavilionroad.co.uk. 10 units. £180 ($360) double. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Knightsbridge. **Amenities:** Room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

BELGRAVIA

EXPENSIVE

The Diplomat Hotel ★ *Finds* Part of the Diplomat's charm is that it is a small and reasonably priced hotel located in an otherwise prohibitively expensive neighborhood. Only minutes from Harrods department store, it was built in 1882 as a private residence by noted architect Thomas Cubbitt. The registration desk is framed by the sweep of a partially gilded circular staircase; above it, cherubs gaze down from a Regency-era chandelier. The staff is helpful, well-mannered, and discreet. The high-ceilinged guest rooms are tastefully done in Victorian style. You get good—not grand—comfort here. Rooms are a bit small and usually furnished with twin beds.

2 Chesham St., London SW1X 8DT. ✆ **020/7235-1544.** Fax 020/7259-6153. www.thediplomathotel.co.uk. 26 units. £125–£170 ($250–$340) double. Rates include English buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Sloane Sq. or Knightsbridge. **Amenities:** Snack bar; business services; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, trouser press.

MODERATE

B + B Belgravia ★★ In its first year of operation (2005), this elegant town house won a top Gold Award as "the best B&B in London." It richly deserves it. Design, service, quality, and comfort paid off. The prices are also reasonable, the atmosphere in this massively renovated building is stylish, and the location grand: just a 5-minute walk from Victoria Station. The good-size bedrooms are luxuriously furnished. In the guest lounge with its comfy sofas, an open fire burns on nippy nights. There is also a DVD library, and tea and coffee are served 24 hours a day. The full English breakfast in the morning is one of the finest in the area.

64–66 Ebury St., Belgravia, London SW1W 9QD. ✆ **020/7259-8570.** Fax 020/7259-8591. www.bb-belgravia.com. 17 units. £107 ($214) double; £147 ($294) family room. Rates include a full English breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: Victoria Station. **Amenities:** Communal lounge; breakfast room. *In room:* TV.

CHELSEA

EXPENSIVE

The Draycott Hotel ★★★ Everything about this place, radically upgraded into a government five-star rating, reeks of British gentility, style, and charm. So attentive is the staff that past clients, who have included John Malkovich, Pierce Brosnan, and Gerard Depardieu, are greeted when they enter by a staff that manages to be both hip and cordial. The hotel took its present-day form when a third brick-fronted town house was added to a pair of interconnected town houses that had been functioning as a five-star hotel since the

1980s. That, coupled with tons of money spent on English antiques, rich draperies, and an upgrade of those expensive infrastructures you'll never see, including security, have transformed this place into a gem. The location, close to Sloane Square, Harrods, and the bustling thoroughfares of Knightsbridge, is one of this hotel's best assets. Bedrooms are each outfitted differently, each with haute English style and plenty of fashion chic.

26 Cadogan Gardens, London SW3 2RP. ✆ **800/747-4942** or 020/7730-6466. Fax 020/7730-0236. www.draycotthotel.com. 35 units. £230–£290 ($460–$580) double; £370 ($740) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Sloane Sq. **Amenities:** Bar; access to nearby spa and fitness club; Internet station; room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; complimentary tea daily at 4pm; complimentary champagne daily at 6pm; hot chocolate at 9:30pm; bar snacks. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar.

SOUTH KENSINGTON

EXPENSIVE

Number Sixteen ★ This luxurious pension is composed of four early Victorian town houses linked together. The scrupulously maintained front and rear gardens make this one of the most idyllic spots on the street. The rooms are decorated with an eclectic mix of English antiques and modern paintings, although some of the decor looks a little faded. Accommodations range from small to spacious and have themes such as tartan and maritime. Breakfast can be served in your bedroom, in the conservatory, or if the weather's good, in the garden, with its bubbling fountain and fishpond.

16 Sumner Place, London SW7 3EG. ✆ **800/592-5387** in the U.S., or 020/7589-5232. Fax 020/7584-8615. www.numbersixteenhotel.co.uk. 42 units. £200–£270 ($400–$540) double. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking £39 ($78). Tube: South Kensington. **Amenities:** Honor bar; lounge; access to nearby health club; room service; babysitting; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, minibar, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

INEXPENSIVE

Avonmore Hotel ★ *Finds* The refurbished Avonmore is easily accessible to West End theaters and shops, yet it's located in a quiet neighborhood, only 2 minutes from the West Kensington stop on the District Line. This privately owned place—a former National Award winner as the best private hotel in London—boasts wall-to-wall carpeting in each tastefully decorated room. Bathrooms are well maintained, equipped either with a bathtub or shower. The owner, Margaret McKenzie, provides lots of personal service. An English breakfast is served in a cheerful room, and a wide range of drinks is available in the cozy bar.

66 Avonmore Rd., London W14 8RS. ✆ **020/7603-4296.** Fax 020/7603-4035. www.avonmorehotel.co.uk. 9 units. £85–£110 ($170–$220) double; £95–£130

($190–$260) triple. Rates include English breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: West Kensington. **Amenities:** Bar; room service; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, minibar, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

Base2stay *Value* Down in Kensington a new concept in hotels has emerged, offering great value by providing "a synthesis" of what guests really need and use—minus the frills. What you get are stylish, comfortably furnished accommodations with small kitchenettes. The cheapest rooms contain bunk beds for two, and suites can be made by way of interconnecting rooms. Living may be stripped to the basics, but this is no hostel, as there is a 24-hour reception service as well as daily maid service.

25 Courtfield Gardens, London SW5 OPG. ✆ **800/511-9821** in the U.S., or 020/7491-2948. www.base2stay.com. 67 units. £95 ($190) bunk beds for 2; £119 ($238) double; £189 ($378) deluxe units for 4 guests. AE, MC, V. Tube: Earl's Court. **Amenities:** Nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, kitchenette.

EASYHotel *Value* This hotel runs on the principle that guests would rather have smaller hotel rooms and pay less. If you're claustrophobic, this hotel is definitely not for you. The rooms are 6 to 7 sq. m (65–75 sq. ft.), with most of the space taken up by standard double beds. If you can get a room with a window, do so because it makes a big difference. Just off Cromwell Road between South Kensington and Earl's Court, Easy offers all doubles, each with a cramped bathroom containing a shower. There are flatscreen TVs in every unit, but a £5 ($10) fee is assessed to use the set. As management jokingly says, "Our rooms come in three sizes: small, very small, and tiny." One staff member is permanently on-site, but no services are offered. Other than a staffed reception desk, there is no common public area. Instead of phoning the hotel, all EASYHotel bookings are taken by credit card through its website.

14 Lexham Gardens, Kensington, London W8 5JE. www.easyhotel.com. 34 units. £30–£50 ($60–$100) double. MC, V. Tube: South Kensington or Earl's Court. **Amenities:** Reception desk; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C, TV.

EARL'S COURT

MODERATE

20 Nevern Square ★ *Finds* Many of the affordable hotels around Earl's Court are seedy but not this restored hotel, a stately redbrick Victorian house with a distinctly Asian feeling, from the lounge's porcelain vases and ornate bird cages to the heavy silk draperies. There's even a Pasha Suite with a cedar aroma with luxurious silk curtains in a peacock design or a silk-draped canopied Sleigh Double. Some of the smaller rooms are made to feel much smaller by the

heavy furniture, most of which was shipped in from Indonesia. Several of the bedrooms feature private terraces.

20 Nevern Sq., Earl's Court, London SW5 9PD. ✆ **020/7565-9555.** Fax 020/7565-9444. www.twentynevernsquare.co.uk. 23 units. £89–£195 ($178–$390) double; £159–£250 ($318–$500) suite. AE, MC, V. Tube: Earl's Court. **Amenities:** Cafe; bar; arrangement w/gym; Internet access; room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, trouser press, safe.

INEXPENSIVE

Henley House *Value* This B&B stands out from the pack around Earl's Court—and it's a better value than most. The redbrick Victorian row house is on a communal fenced-in garden that you can enter by borrowing a key from the reception desk. The staff members take a keen interest in the welfare of their guests and are happy to take bewildered newcomers under their wing, so this is an ideal place for London first-timers. A ground-floor sitting room overlooks a rear courtyard. The decor is bright and contemporary; a typical room has warmly patterned wallpaper, chintz fabrics, and solid-brass lighting fixtures. Breakfast is a cheerful event, served in a room decorated with terra-cotta accents and pots of dried flowers.

30 Barkston Gardens, London SW5 0EN. ✆ **020/7370-4111.** Fax 020/7370-0026. www.henleyhousehotel.com. 21 units. £69–£89 ($138–$178) double; £99–£110 ($198–$220) triple. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Earl's Court. **Amenities:** Breakfast room; lounge; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

4 Marylebone to Holland Park

MARYLEBONE

VERY EXPENSIVE

The Mandeville Hotel ★★ Call it refurbished London. In trendy Marylebone Village, just a short stroll from Selfridges and Bond Street shops, the Mandeville has been totally restored, its former 166 bedrooms restructured into 142 units. This once-staid property is now a hot address—one of London's leading decorators, Stephen Ryan, was brought in to restyle the lobby, restaurant, and bar. In the de Ville Restaurant, modern British cuisine is served against a backdrop of floral wallpaper punctuated by theatrical, clear Perspex-framed paintings and Venetian-mask wall lights.

Mandeville Place, London W1U 2BE. ✆ **020/7935-5599.** Fax 020/7935-9588. www.mandeville.co.uk. 142 units. £250–£300 ($500–$600) double; from £400 ($800) suite. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Bond St. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; gym; room service; laundry service; dry cleaning; all nonsmoking rooms; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C, TV, minibar (in some), beverage maker, hair dryer, iron, safe, Wi-Fi.

EXPENSIVE

Durrants Hotel ★ This historic hotel (established in 1789) off Manchester Square with its Georgian-detailed facade is snug, cozy, and traditional—almost like a poor man's Brown's (p. 48). We find it to be one of the most quintessentially English of all London hotels. You could invite the Queen to Durrants for tea. Over the 100 years they have owned the hotel, the Miller family has incorporated several neighboring houses into the original structure. A walk through the pine-and-mahogany-paneled public rooms is like stepping back in time: You'll even find an 18th-century letter-writing room. The bedrooms are rather bland except for elaborate cove moldings and comfortable furnishings, including good beds.

26–32 George St., London W1H 5BJ. ✆ **020/7935-8131.** Fax 020/7487-3510. www.durrantshotel.co.uk. 92 units. £205–£230 ($410–$460) double; £210 ($420) family room for 3; from £340 ($680) suite. AE, MC, V. Tube: Bond St. or Baker St. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; babysitting; laundry service; dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms; rooms for those w/limited mobility. *In room:* A/C (in most), TV, hair dryer, safe (in most).

MODERATE

Hart House Hotel ★ *Kids* Hart House is a long-enduring favorite with Frommer's readers. In the heart of The West End, this well-preserved historic building (one of a group of Georgian mansions occupied by exiled French nobles during the French Revolution) lies within easy walking distance of many theaters. The rooms—done in a combination of furnishings, ranging from Portobello antique to modern—are spick-and-span, each one with a different character. Favorites include no. 7, a triple with a big bathroom and shower. Ask for no. 11, on the top floor, if you'd like a brightly lit aerie. Housekeeping rates high marks here, and each bedroom is comfortably appointed with chairs, an armoire, a desk, and a large chest of drawers. Hart House has long been known as a good, safe place for traveling families. Many of its rooms are triples. Larger families can avail themselves of special family accommodations with connecting rooms.

51 Gloucester Place, Portman Sq., London W1U 8JF. ✆ **020/7935-2288.** Fax 020/7935-8516. www.harthouse.co.uk. 15 units. £125 ($250) double; £145 ($290) triple; £175 ($350) quad. Rates include English breakfast. MC, V. Tube: Marble Arch or Baker St. **Amenities:** Babysitting. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

The Sumner ★ *Finds* This town-house hotel, part of an 1820s Georgian Terrace, has blossomed into one of the finest boutique town-house hotels in central London. It retains much of its original architectural allure from when it was a private Georgian residence. The standard rooms are midsize and attractively furnished, but you

can also rent deluxe rooms with artwork and better furnishings. All the guest rooms are designer decorated and luxuriously appointed, and there is also an elegant sitting room with a working fireplace and timber flooring.

54 Upper Berkeley St., Marble Arch, London W1H 7QR. ✆ **020/7723-2244.** Fax 087/0705-8767. www.thesumner.com. 20 units. £125–£160 ($250–$320) double. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: Marble Arch. **Amenities:** Nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, fridge, hair dryer, Wi-Fi.

INEXPENSIVE

Edward Lear Hotel This popular hotel, situated 1 block from Marble Arch, is made all the more desirable by the bouquets of fresh flowers in its public rooms. It occupies a pair of brick town houses dating from 1780. The western house was the London home of 19th-century artist and poet Edward Lear, famous for his nonsense verse, and his illustrated limericks adorn the walls of one of the sitting rooms. Steep stairs lead up to cozy rooms which range from spacious to broom-closet size. Bedrooms are looking better than ever following a wholesale renovation in 2007. If you're looking for classiness, know that the bacon on your plate came from the same butcher used by the Queen. One major drawback to the hotel: This is a very noisy part of town. Rear rooms are quieter.

28–30 Seymour St., London W1H 7JB. ✆ **020/7402-5401.** Fax 020/7706-3766. www.edlear.com. 32 units, 18 with bathroom. £80 ($160) double without bathroom; £83 ($166) double with bathroom (shower only); £85 ($170) double with bathroom; £72–£85 ($144–$170) triple without bathroom; £74–£99 ($148–$198) triple with bathroom (shower only). Rates include English breakfast and tax. AE, MC, V. Tube: Marble Arch. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker.

Hallam Hotel This heavily ornamented stone-and-brick Victorian—one of the few on the street to escape the Blitz—is just a 5-minute stroll from Oxford Circus. It's the property of brothers Grant and David Baker, who maintain it well. The hotel is warm and friendly, and the central location that you get for these prices can't be beat. The guest rooms are comfortably furnished with good beds. Some of the singles (£90/$180) are so small they're called "cabinettes." Several of the twin-bedded rooms are quite spacious and have adequate closet space.

12 Hallam St., Portland Place, London W1N 5LF. ✆ **020/7580-1166.** Fax 020/7323-4527. www.hallamhotel.com. 25 units. £100 ($200) double. Rates include English breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Oxford Circus. **Amenities:** Bar. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer.

Regency Hotel The building is from the 1800s, and there has been a hotel of some kind here since the Blitz. In 1991, the place was

gutted and renovated into its present form. One of the better hotels on the street, it offers simple, conservatively decorated modern bedrooms scattered over four floors and a breakfast room set in what used to be the cellar. The neighborhood is protected as a historic district, and Marble Arch, Regent's Park, and Baker Street all lie within a 15-minute walk.

19 Nottingham Place, London W1U 5LQ. ✆ **020/7486-5347.** Fax 020/7224-6057. www.regencyhotelwestend.co.uk. 20 units. £80–£94 ($160–$188) double; £110–£125 ($220–$250) family room. Rates include English breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking £25 ($50) nearby. Tube: Baker St. or Regent's Park. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker, hair dryer, trouser press or iron.

PADDINGTON & BAYSWATER

EXPENSIVE

London Elizabeth Hotel This elegant Victorian town house is ideally situated, overlooking Hyde Park. Amid the buzz and excitement of central London, the hotel's atmosphere is an oasis of charm and refinement. Even before the hotel's recent £3-million ($6-million) restoration, it oozed character. Individually decorated rooms range from executive to deluxe and remind us of staying in an English country house. Deluxe rooms are fully air-conditioned, and some contain four-poster beds. Executive units usually contain one double or twin bed. Some rooms have special features such as Victorian antique fireplaces. Suites are pictures of grand comfort and luxury—the Conservatory Suite boasts its own veranda, part of the house's original 1850 conservatory.

Lancaster Terrace, Hyde Park, London W2 3PF. ✆ **800/721-5566** in the U.S., or 020/7402-6641. Fax 020/7224-8900. www.londonelizabethhotel.co.uk. 49 units. £165–£180 ($330–$360) double; £275 ($550) suite. Rates include buffet breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Parking £12 ($24). Tube: Lancaster Gate or Paddington. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C (in some), TV, hair dryer.

MODERATE

Mornington Hotel Affiliated with Best Western, the Mornington brings a touch of northern European hospitality to the center of London. Just north of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, the hotel has a Victorian exterior and a Scandinavian-inspired decor. The area isn't London's most fashionable, but it's close to Hyde Park and convenient to Marble Arch, Oxford Street shopping, and the ethnic restaurants of Queensway. Renovated guest rooms are tasteful and comfortable, all with pay movies. Every year we get our annual Christmas card from "the gang," as we refer to the hotel staff—and what a helpful crew they are.

12 Lancaster Gate, London W2 3LG. ✆ **800/633-6548** in the U.S., or 020/7262-7361. Fax 020/7706-1028. www.bw-morningtonhotel.co.uk. 66 units. £144–£156 ($288–$312) double. Rates include Scandinavian and English breakfast. AE, DC, MC, V. Tube: Lancaster Gate. **Amenities:** Bar; courtesy car; business center; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* TV, coffeemaker.

The Pavilion ★ *Finds* Until the early 1990s, this was a rather ordinary-looking B&B. Then a team of entrepreneurs with ties to the fashion industry took over and redecorated the rooms with sometimes wacky themes, turning it into an idiosyncratic little hotel. The result is a theatrical and often outrageous decor that's appreciated by the many fashion models and music-industry folks who regularly make this their temporary home in London. Rooms are, regrettably, rather small, but each has a distinctive style. Examples include a kitschy 1970s room ("Honky-Tonk Afro"), an Asian bordello–themed room ("Enter the Dragon"), and even rooms with 19th-century ancestral themes. One Edwardian-style room, a gem of emerald brocade and velvet, is called "Green with Envy."

34–36 Sussex Gardens, London W2 1UL. ✆ **020/7262-0905.** Fax 020/7262-1324. www.pavilionhoteluk.com. 30 units. £100 ($200) double; £120 ($240) triple. Rates include continental breakfast. AE, MC, V. Parking £10 ($20). Tube: Edgeware Rd. *In room:* TV, beverage maker.

INEXPENSIVE

Garden Court You'll find this hotel on a tranquil Victorian garden square in the heart of the city. Two private houses (dating from 1870) were combined to form one efficiently run hotel, located near such attractions as Kensington Palace, Hyde Park, and the Portobello Antiques Market. Each year, rooms are redecorated and refurbished, although an overall renovation plan seems to be lacking. Most accommodations are spacious, with good lighting, generous shelf and closet space, and comfortable furnishings. If you're in a room without a bathroom, you'll generally have to share with the occupants of only one other room. There are many homelike touches throughout the hotel, including ancestral portraits and silk flowers. Each room is individually decorated and "comfy"; it's like visiting your great-aunt. Rooms open onto the square in front or the gardens in the rear.

30–31 Kensington Gardens Sq., London W2 4BG. ✆ **020/7229-2553.** Fax 020/7727-2749. www.gardencourthotel.co.uk. 34 units, 16 with bathroom. £76 ($152) double without bathroom; £118 ($236) double with bathroom; £150 ($300) triple with bathroom; £170 ($340) family room. Rates include English breakfast. MC, V. Tube: Bayswater. **Amenities:** Lounge; coin-op washers and dryers. *In room:* TV, hair dryer.

NOTTING HILL GATE

EXPENSIVE

Guesthouse West ★ *Value* In the heart of Notting Hill, this hip, upmarket B&B lies in a stucco-fronted Edwardian house in the fashionable part of Westbourne Grove. Much of the family atmosphere of the original private home has been retained, and midsize bedrooms are comfortable, with understated style. Even if you're not a guest, drop in to the ground-floor 1950s-style bar, created by the savvy entrepreneurs of Woody's and the Bush Bar and Grill.

163–165 Westbourne Grove, London Wll 2RS. ✆ **020/7792-9800.** Fax 020/7792-9797. www.guesthousewest.com. 20 units. £140–£185 ($280–$370) double. Rates include breakfast. AE, MC, V. Tube: Notting Hill Gate. **Amenities:** Restaurant; bar; room service; babysitting; nonsmoking rooms. *In room:* A/C, TV, Wi-Fi.

MODERATE

The Main House ★★ *Finds* Each beautifully appointed room takes up a whole floor of this Victorian town house in Notting Hill, close to Portobello Road, the antiques markets, art galleries, and designer shops. Kensington Palace and Albert Hall are within walking distance. Russian princesses, Japanese pop stars, and Los Angeles film producers have already discovered this spot. Owner and creator Caroline Main is a former African explorer, Mayfair nightclub owner, and DJ. To furnish the house, she shopped "quirky" on Portobello Road, picking up gilded mirrors, watercolors of elegantly dressed 1930s women, and similar antiques. The ceilings are dramatically high, and the gleaming wood floors are swathed in animal skins.

6 Colville Rd., London W11 2BP. ✆ **020/7221-9691.** www.themainhouse.co.uk. 4 suites. £130 ($260) suite. MC, V. Parking £2.50 ($5) per hour. Tube: Notting Hill Gate. Bus: 23, 27, 52, 94, or 328. **Amenities:** Reduced rate at nearby health club and spa; free bikes; room service; laundry service; same-day dry cleaning. *In room:* TV, hair dryer, safe, Wi-Fi.

INEXPENSIVE

The Gate Hotel This antiques-hunters' favorite is the only hotel along the length of Portobello Road—and because of rigid zoning restrictions, it will probably remain the only one for years to come. It was built in the 1820s as housing for farmhands at the now-defunct Portobello Farms and has functioned as a hotel since 1932. It has two cramped but cozy bedrooms on each of its three floors. Be prepared for some *very* steep English stairs. Rooms are color-coordinated, with a bit of style, and have such extras as full-length mirrors and built-in wardrobes. Housekeeping is excellent. Especially intriguing are the wall paintings that show the original Portobello

Market: Every character looks like it is straight from a Dickens novel. The on-site manager can direct you to the attractions of Notting Hill Gate and nearby Kensington Gardens, both within a 5-minute walk.

6 Portobello Rd., London W11 3DG. ✆ **020/7221-0707.** Fax 020/7221-9128. www.gatehotel.com. 7 units. £80–£100 ($160–$200) double; £120–£150 ($240–$300) triple. Rates include continental breakfast (served in room). AE, MC, V. Tube: Notting Hill Gate or Holland Park. **Amenities:** Room service. *In room:* TV, minibar, beverage maker, hair dryer, iron.

3

Where to Dine

In 1946, George Mikes, Britain's famous Hungarian-born humorist, wrote about the cuisine of his adopted country: "The Continentals have good food. The English have good table manners."

Quite a lot has happened since.

London has emerged as one of the great food capitals of the world. Both its veteran and upstart chefs have fanned out around the globe for culinary inspiration and returned with innovative dishes, flavors, and ideas that London diners have never seen before. These chefs are pioneering "Modern British" style, which is innovative, yet familiar in many ways.

Traditional British cooking has made a comeback, too. The dishes that British mums have been forever feeding their families are fashionable again. We're talking British soul food: bangers and mash, Norfolk dumplings, cottage pie. This may be a rebellion against the minimalism of the nouvelle cuisine of the 1980s, but maybe it's just plain nostalgia. Pig's nose with parsley-and-onion sauce may not be your idea of cutting-edge cuisine, but Simpson's-in-the-Strand is serving it for breakfast.

If you want a lavish meal, London is the place: Gourmet havens such as Le Gavroche and a half-dozen others are reviewed in the following pages. We've also included many affordable restaurants where you can dine well and still pay off your mortgage. You'll find that London's food revolution has infiltrated every level of the dining scene—even the lowly pub has entered the culinary sweepstakes. Believe the unthinkable: At certain pubs, you can now dine better than in many restaurants. In some, standard pub grub has given way to Modern British and Mediterranean-style fare; in others, oyster bars have taken hold.

1 In & Around the City

THE CITY

EXPENSIVE

Prism ★★ MODERN BRITISH In the financial district, called the City, this restaurant attracts London's movers and shakers and

their demanding palates. Harvey Nichols—known for his chic department store in Knightsbridge—took this 1920s neo-Grecian hall and installed Mies van der Rohe chairs in chrome and lipstick-red leather. In this setting, traditional British dishes from the north are given a light touch—try the tempura of Whitby cod, or cream of Jerusalem artichoke soup with roasted scallops and truffle oil. For a first course, you may opt for a small, seared calves' liver with a mushroom risotto, or try a salad of Parmesan cheese seasoning a Savoy cabbage salad and Parma ham. The menu reveals the chef has traveled a bit—note such dishes as Moroccan spiced chicken livers, lemon and parsley couscous, and a zesty chili sauce.

147 Leadenhall St., EC3. ✆ **020/7256-3875.** Reservations required. Main courses £18–£24 ($36–$48). AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–3pm and 6–10pm. Tube: Bank or Monument.

MODERATE

Café Spice Namaste ★★ INDIAN This is our favorite Indian restaurant in London, where the competition is stiff. It's cheerfully housed in a landmark Victorian hall near Tower Bridge, just east of the Tower of London. The Parsi chef, Cyrus Todiwala, concentrates on southern and northern Indian dishes, with a strong Portuguese influence. Chicken and lamb are prepared a number of ways, from mild to spicy-hot. As a novelty, Todiwala occasionally even offers a menu of emu dishes; when marinated, the meat is rich and spicy and evocative of lamb. Emu is not the only dining oddity here. Ever have ostrich gizzard kabob, alligator tikka, or minced moose, bison, or blue boar? Many patrons journey here just for the complex chicken curry known as *xacutti.* Lambs' livers and kidneys are also cooked in the tandoor.

16 Prescot St., E1. ✆ **020/7488-9242.** Reservations required. Main courses £12–£19 ($24–$38). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 6:15–10:30pm; Sat 6:30–10:30pm. Tube: Tower Hill.

Club Gascon ★★ *Finds* FRENCH This slice of southwestern France serves such tasty treats as foie gras, Armagnac, and duck confit. Chef Pascal Aussignac is all the rage in London, ever since he opened his bistro next to the meat market in Smithfield. Foie gras appears in at least nine different incarnations on the menu, and most of the first-class ingredients are imported from France. His menu is uniquely divided into these categories—"The Salt Route," "Ocean," and "Kitchen Garden." The best way to dine here is to arrive in a party of four or five and share the small dishes, each harmoniously balanced and full of flavor. Each dish is accompanied by a carefully

Where to Dine in London

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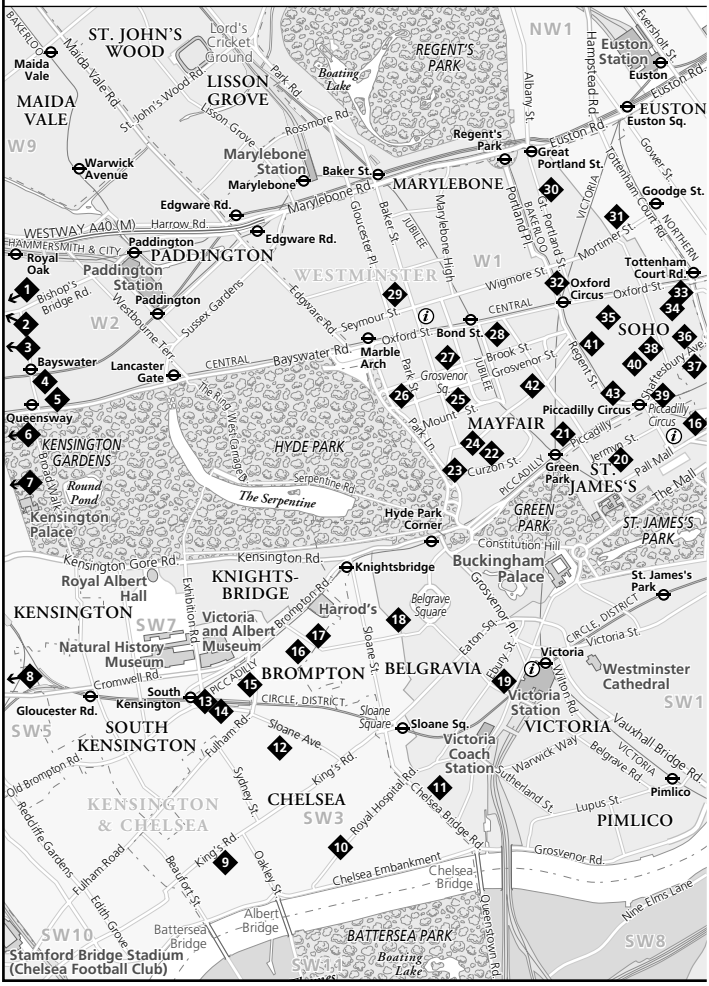

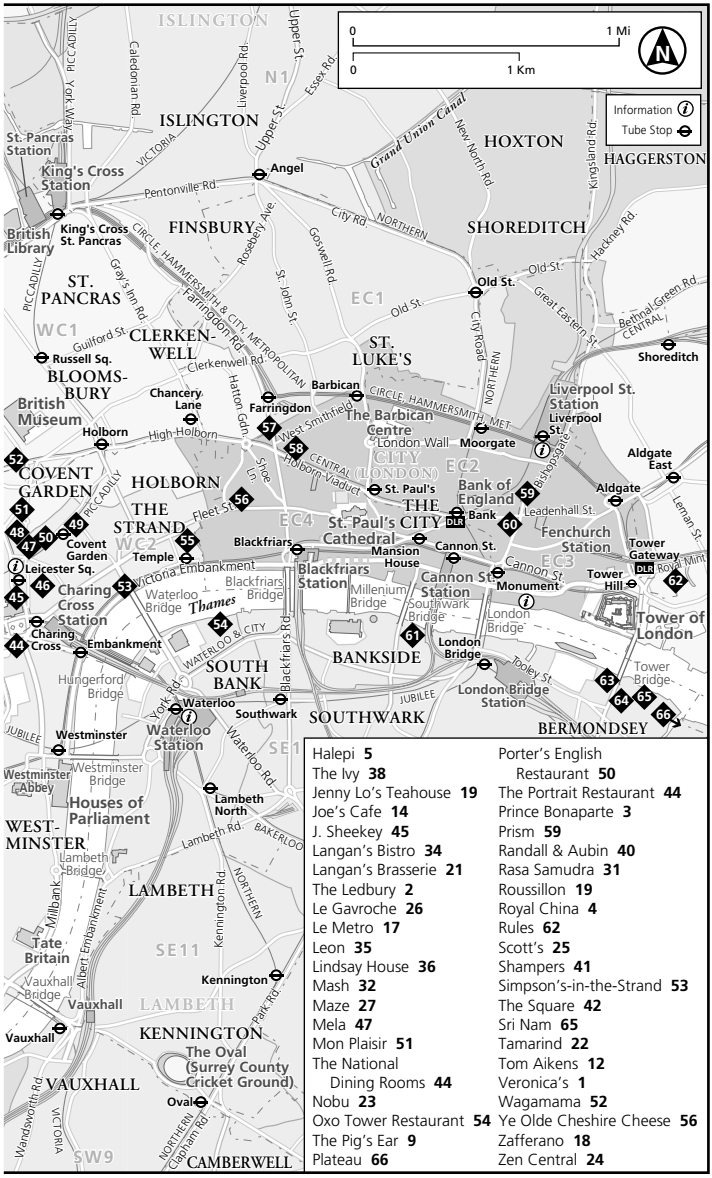

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selected glass of wine. After a foie gras pig out, proceed to such main courses as a heavenly quail served with pear and rosemary honey. A cassoulet of morels and truffles transforms a plain but perfectly cooked steak.

57 West Smithfield, EC1. ✆ **020/7796-0600.** Reservations required. Main courses £9–£20 ($18–$40). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2pm and 7–10pm; Sat 7–10:30pm. Tube: Barbican.

INEXPENSIVE

Fox and Anchor ★ *Finds* TRADITIONAL BRITISH For British breakfast at its best, try this place, which has been serving traders from the nearby Smithfield meat market since 1898. Breakfasts are gargantuan, especially if you order the "Full House"—a plate with at least eight items, including sausage, bacon, kidneys, eggs, beans, black pudding, and fried bread, along with unlimited tea or coffee, toast, and jam. Add a Black Velvet (champagne with Guinness), or the more fashionable Bucks Fizz (orange juice and champagne, known in the U.S. as a mimosa). The staff serves an even bigger breakfast called "The Full Monty" including a Guinness. Of course, more delicate stomachs might settle for smoked salmon and scrambled eggs. The Fox and Anchor is noted for its fine English ales, which are all available at breakfast. Butchers from the market, spotted with blood, still appear, as do clerks and City tycoons who've been making millions all night. For lunch and dinner the food is standard pub fare, including fish and chips, steak-and-kidney pie, and a choice of steaks, followed by such classic British desserts as sticky toffee pudding or chocolate fudge cake.

115 Charterhouse St., EC1. ✆ **020/7250-1300.** www.foxandanchor.co.uk. Reservations recommended. "Full house" breakfast £6.50 ($13); Full Monty breakfast £11 ($22); main courses £6.50–£14 ($13–$28). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri from 7am, closing time varies from 9–11pm. Tube: Barbican or Farringdon.

Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese *Kids* TRADITIONAL BRITISH The foundation of this carefully preserved building was laid in the 13th century, and it holds the most famous of the old City chophouses and pubs. Established in 1667, it claims to be the spot where Dr. Samuel Johnson entertained admirers with his acerbic wit. Charles Dickens and other literary lions patronized the place. Later, many of the ink-stained journalists and scandalmongers of 19th- and early-20th-century Fleet Street made it their watering hole. You'll find five bars and two dining rooms here. The house specialties include "Ye Famous Pudding" (steak, kidney, mushrooms, and game) and Scottish roast beef with Yorkshire pudding and horseradish sauce. Sandwiches, salads, and steak-and-kidney pie are also available, as are

dishes such as Dover sole. The Cheshire is the best venue to introduce your children to an English pub.

Wine Office Court, 145 Fleet St., EC4. ✆ **020/7353-6170.** Main courses £8–£10 ($16–$20). AE, DC, MC, V. Meals: Mon–Fri noon–10pm; Sat noon–2:30pm and 6–9:30pm; Sun noon–2:30pm. Drinks and bar snacks: Mon–Sat 11am–11pm; Sun noon–6pm. Tube: St. Paul's or Blackfriars.

DOCKLANDS

EXPENSIVE

Butler's Wharf Chop House ✪ TRADITIONAL BRITISH Of the four restaurants housed in Butler's Wharf (other Butler's Wharf restaurants are listed in this chapter), this one is the closest to Tower Bridge. The Chop House was modeled after a large boathouse, with lots of exposed wood, flowers, candles, and windows overlooking Tower Bridge and the Thames. Lunchtime crowds include workers from the city's financial district; evening crowds are made up of friends dining together leisurely. Dishes are largely adaptations of English recipes such as fish and chips with mushy peas or steak-and-kidney-pudding with oysters, even roast pork loin with applesauce. The bar features several English wines, plus a half-dozen French clarets by the jug.

36E Shad Thames, SE1. ✆ **020/7403-3403.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £14–£26 ($28–$52); 2-course fixed-price lunch £22 ($44); 3-course fixed-price lunch £26 ($52). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Sat–Sun noon–4pm; Mon–Sat 6–11pm (6–10pm May–Oct); Sun 6–10pm. Tube: Tower Hill or London Bridge.

MODERATE

The Bengal Clipper ✪ INDIAN This former spice warehouse by the Thames serves what it calls "India's most remarkable dishes." The restaurant is outfitted with modern artwork inspired by the Moghul Dynasty's depictions of royal figures, soaring trees, and well-trained elephants. Seven windows afford sweeping views over the industrialized Thames-side neighborhood, and live piano music plays in the background. The cuisine includes many vegetarian choices derived from the former Portuguese colony of Goa and the once-English colony of Bengal. There is a zestiness and spice to the cuisine, but it's never overpowering. A tasty specialty is stuffed *murgh masala,* a tender breast of chicken with potatoes, onions, and apricots. The duckling (off the bone) comes in a tangy sauce with a citrus bite. One of the finest dishes we tasted in North India is served here and has lost nothing in the transfer: marinated lamb simmered in cream with cashew nuts.

Shad Thames, Butler's Wharf, SE1. ✆ **020/7357-9001.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £9–£15 ($18–$30); set menu £10 ($20) (available July–Apr); Sun

buffet £7.75 ($16). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 6–11:30pm; Sun noon–4pm and 6–11pm. Tube: Tower Hill.

CANARY WHARF

EXPENSIVE

Plateau FRENCH Entrepreneur Terence Conran has succeeded again with the opening of this trend-setting restaurant at Canary Wharf, serving a modern French cuisine. The chef proudly boasts that he appeals to both high- and lowbrow palates—and he does so admirably. The location is at the top of the Canada Place building, with panoramic views of London. There are two different dining sections divided by a semi-open kitchen. One is a chic bar and grill, the other a more formal restaurant, each with its own terrace, plus two bars and a cigar room. In the bar and grill, partake of food enjoyed in the 1920s and 1930s, notably Colchester native oysters followed by Billingsgate fish pie. The upgraded cuisine in the main restaurant is quite sumptuous—a foie gras terrine with champagne jelly followed by such main courses as venison stew with spaetzle and Savoy cabbage.

Canada Place, Canary Wharf, E14. ✆ **020/7715-7100.** Reservations recommended. Bar and grill main courses £11–£28 ($22–$56); restaurant main courses £21–£30 ($42–$60); fixed-price menus (dinner only) £35–£40 ($70–$80). AE, DC, MC, V. Bar and grill Mon–Sat noon–11pm, Sun noon–4pm; restaurant Mon–Fri noon–3pm, Mon–Sat 6–10:30pm, Sun noon–4pm. Tube: Canary Wharf.

MODERATE

Sri Nam ★ *Finds* THAI Celebrity chef Ken Hom is the chief exponent of Thai cookery in London, and even the Thai community agrees he's the best. Some of his culinary secrets are revealed in his book, *Foolproof Thai Cookery.* At Canary Wharf, Sri Nam brings an authentic and very spicy (read: hot) cuisine to foodies who like to dine on the Thames. There's a buzz-filled cafe-bar on the ground floor and a more formal restaurant upstairs. The Thai cuisine served here is a fusion of modern and traditional, the latter in theory the type served to the "King of Siam." The classic star of the menu is *pad thai,* a delightful stir-fry of noodles with eggs, vegetables, and bean sprouts, garnished with ground peanuts and fresh coriander. Also served here (and rarely seen on other London menus) is lamb masaman, flavored with peanuts and potatoes. The signature dish—and is it ever good—is the Thai green chicken curry with chilies, coconut milk, bamboo shoots, baby eggplant, and lime leaves.

N. Colonnade, 10 Cabot Sq., Canary Wharf, E14. ✆ **020/7715-9515.** www.srinam.co.uk. Reservations required. Main courses £8.50–£14 ($17–$28); fixed-price menus £25–£30 ($50–$60). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 5–11pm. Tube: Canary Wharf.

SOUTH BANK

EXPENSIVE

Oxo Tower Restaurant ★ INTERNATIONAL In the South Bank complex, on the eighth floor of the Art Deco Oxo Tower Wharf, you'll find this dining sensation. Down the street from the rebuilt Globe Theatre, this 140-seat restaurant could be visited for its view alone, but the cuisine is also stellar. You'll enjoy a sweeping view of St. Paul's Cathedral and the City, all the way to the Houses of Parliament. The decor is chic 1930s style. The cuisine, under Chef David Sharland, is rich and prepared with finesse. Menu items change based on the season and the market. Count on a modern interpretation of British cookery, as well as the English classics. The fish is incredibly fresh here. The whole sea bass for two is delectable, as is the roast rump of lamb with split pea, mint purée, and balsamic vinegar sauce. We were impressed with the roast filet of plaice with olive oil and truffle cabbage cream, and the roast squab with buttered cabbage and a foie-gras sauce.

22 Barge House St., South Bank, SE1. ✆ **020/7803-3888.** Main courses £19–£28 ($38–$56); 3-course fixed-price lunch £32 ($64). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm; Sun noon–3pm and 6:30–10pm. Tube: Blackfriars or Waterloo.

MODERATE

Cantina Vinopolis ★ *Finds* CONTINENTAL Not far from the re-created Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's heyday, this place has been called a "Walk-Through Wine Atlas." In the revitalized Bankside area, south of the Thames near Southwark Cathedral, this bricked, walled, and high-vaulted brasserie was converted from long-abandoned Victorian railway arches. Although many come here just to drink the wine, the food is prepared with quality ingredients (very fresh), and the menu is sensibly priced. Start with a bit of heaven such as the pea and ham soup. Dishes are full of flavor and never overcooked. Pan-fried snapper, with crushed new potatoes and salsa verde, won us over. A rump of lamb was tender and perfectly flavored and served with a polenta cake. Many of the dishes have the good country taste of a trattoria you'd find in the countryside of southern Italy. Naturally, the wine list is the biggest in the U.K.

1 Bank End, London Bridge, SE1. ✆ **020/7940-8333.** Reservations required. Main courses £13–£23 ($26–$46); 3-course fixed-price menu £32 ($64). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 6–10:30pm; Sun noon–4pm. Tube: London Bridge.

2 The West End

BLOOMSBURY

MODERATE

Back to Basics ✪✪ SEAFOOD Ursula Higgs's bistro draws discerning palates seeking some of the freshest seafood in London. The fish is served in large portions, and you can safely forgo an appetizer unless you're ravenous. More than a dozen seafood dishes are offered; the fish can be broiled, grilled, baked, or poached, but frying is not permitted. In other words, this is no fish and chippie. Start with a bowl of tasty, plump mussels or sea bass flavored with fresh basil and chili oil. Brill appears with green peppercorn butter, and plaice is jazzed up with fresh ginger and soy sauce. For the meat eater, there is a T-bone steak or roast chicken. Also try the pastas and the vegetarian dishes. Freshly made salads accompany most meals, and an excellent fish soup is offered daily. For dessert, try the bread pudding or the freshly made apple pie. When the weather's fair, you can dine outside.

21A Foley St., W1. ✆ **020/7436-2181.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £11–£17 ($22–$34). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 6–10:30pm. Tube: Oxford Circus or Goodge St.

INEXPENSIVE

Wagamama JAPANESE This noodle joint, in a basement just off New Oxford Street, is noisy and overcrowded, and you'll have to wait in line for a table. It calls itself a "nondestination food station" and caters to some 1,200 customers a day. Many dishes are built around ramen noodles with your choice of chicken, beef, or salmon. Try the tasty *gyoza,* light dumplings filled with vegetables or chicken. Vegetarian dishes are available, but skip the so-called Korean-style dishes.

4 Streatham St., WC1. ✆ **020/7323-9223.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses £7–£11 ($14–$22). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–10pm. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

COVENT GARDEN & THE STRAND

The restaurants in and around Covent Garden and the Strand are the most convenient choices when you're attending theaters in The West End.

EXPENSIVE

Rules ✪ TRADITIONAL BRITISH London's oldest restaurant was established in 1798 as an oyster bar; today, the antler-filled Edwardian dining rooms exude nostalgia. You can order such classic

dishes as Irish or Scottish oysters, jugged hare, and mussels. Game and fish dishes are offered from mid-August to February or March, including wild Scottish salmon; wild sea trout; wild Highland red deer; and game birds such as grouse, snipe, partridge, pheasant, and woodcock. As a finale, the "great puddings" continue to impress.

35 Maiden Lane, WC2. ✆ **020/7836-5314.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £17–£30 ($34–$60). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Covent Garden.

Simpson's-in-the-Strand ★★ *Kids* BRISITH TRADITIONAL AND MODERN Simpson's is more of an institution than a restaurant. Long a family favorite with lots of large tables, it has been in business since 1828, and as a result of a recent £2-million ($4-million) renovation, it's now better than ever. An army of grandly formal waiters (to whom nouvelle cuisine means anything after Henry VIII) serve traditional English fare. The owners object to the word "menu" here—"too French." It's called "bill of fare." Most diners agree that Simpson's serves the best roasts in London, an array that includes roast sirloin of beef; roast saddle of mutton with red-currant jelly; roast Aylesbury duckling; and steak, kidney, and mushroom pie.

100 the Strand (next to the Savoy Hotel), WC2. ✆ **020/7836-9112.** Reservations required. Main courses £22–£30 ($44–$60); 3-course fixed-price pre-theater dinner £16–£20 ($32–$40); breakfast from £16 ($32). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7:15–10:30am; Mon–Fri 12:15–2:45pm and 5:45–10:45pm; Sun noon–2:45pm and 5:45–9pm. Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment.

MODERATE

Café des Amis FRENCH For more than half a century, Café des Amis has been entertaining theatergoers with the two-fisted drinks at its bar and fine Gallic cuisine in its restaurant. With service by French waiters and sophisticated Continental decor, it brings a touch of Paris to the heart of London. Dishes are both traditional and modern, but with reduced calories since the days of Escoffier. The wine list from France is one of the best in Covent Garden. The cafe is a good choice for a pre- or post-theater meal, or a romantic dinner even if you're not attending a play or musical. The menu is not completely conventional. There are modern touches as well, such as soupe au chocolat with black-pepper ice cream. You might begin with French onion soup or shellfish bisque, perhaps seared scallops with chorizo and roasted hazelnuts. Among the mains we've savored are roasted sea bass in a vinaigrette with palourd clams, and pot-roasted lamb flavored with cinnamon and cloves. Desserts are more English than French, such as poached Yorkshire rhubarb flavored with ginger and served with a cream custard.

11–14 Hanover Place (off Long Acre), WC2. ✆ **020/7379-3444.** www.cafedesamis.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £15–£22 ($30–$44); fixed-price menus £15 ($30) for 2 courses, £17 ($34) for 3 courses. AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–1am. Tube: Covent Garden.

Mon Plaisir *Value* FRENCH Serving fine French cuisine for more than half a century, Mon Plaisir is London's oldest French restaurant. It's so authentic that its pewter-topped bar once graced the lounge of a Lyonnais bordello. The menu wanders into nostalgia with its *classiques* but has been modernized as well. Its pre-theater fixed-price menu is one of the best deals in The West End. Pigs' trotters stuffed with foie gras and langoustines evoke the old markets of Les Halles in Paris. Of course, there are snails with garlic and a traditional French onion soup. The fish dishes are fresh and tantalizing, including coquilles Saint-Jacques (scallops). A delicious coq au vin, another classic, is cooked in burgundy. For dessert, why not the pan-fried brioche with poached pear and—get this—beer ice cream?

21 Monmouth St., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-7243.** www.monplaisir.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £15–£24 ($30–$48); pre-theater menu £14–£16 ($28–$32). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:15pm; Mon–Sat 5:50–11:15pm. Tube: Covent Garden.

Porters English Restaurant ★★ *Kids* TRADITIONAL BRITISH The seventh Earl of Bradford serves "real English food at affordable prices." He succeeds notably—and not just because Lady Bradford turned over her carefully guarded recipe for banana-and-ginger steamed pudding. This comfortable, two-storied restaurant is family friendly, informal, and lively. Porters specializes in English pies, including Old English fish pie, lamb and apricot, and, of course, bangers and mash. The favorite is steak, Guinness, and mushroom pie. Main courses are so generous—and accompanied by vegetables and side dishes—that you hardly need appetizers. They have also added grilled English fare to the menu, with sirloin and lamb steaks and marinated chicken. Porters is famous for its mouthwatering puddings. Where can you find a good spotted dick these days? It's a steamed syrup sponge cake with sultanas (raisins). Another favorite is a dark chocolate-chip pudding made with steamed chocolate sponge, chocolate chips, and chocolate custard. Even the ice cream is homemade.

17 Henrietta St., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-6466.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £11–£17 ($22–$34); fixed-price lunch and pre-theater menu £12 ($24); fixed-price menu £23 ($46). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Covent Garden or Leicester Sq.

INEXPENSIVE

The George TRADITIONAL BRITISH Although the George's half-timbered facade would make you believe it's older than it is, this pub has been around *only* since 1723, when it was built as a coffeehouse. Set on the Strand, at the lower end of Fleet Street opposite the Royal Courts of Justice, the George is a favorite of barristers, their clients, and the handful of journalists who haven't moved to other parts of London. The pub's illustrious history saw Samuel Johnson having his mail delivered here and Oliver Goldsmith enjoying many tankards of what eventually became draft Bass. Today the setting seems only slightly changed, as much of the original architecture is still intact. Hot and cold platters, including bangers and mash, fish and chips, steak-and-kidney pie, and lasagna, are served from a food counter at the back of the pub. Other main dishes include Cumberland sausages with mashed potatoes and red-onion gravy or chicken Parmigiana. A headless cavalier is said to haunt the basement, where he enjoyed his liquor in an earlier (and less headless) day. Although the place has long hours (see below), the actual food service is Monday to Thursday 11am to 3pm, Friday and Saturday noon to 9pm, and Sunday noon to 6:30pm.

213 the Strand, WC2. ✆ **0871/223-3136.** Reservations not needed. Main courses £6.95–£9.95 ($14–$20). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 11am–11:30pm; Fri–Sat noon–midnight; Sun noon–7pm. Tube: Temple.

PICCADILLY CIRCUS & LEICESTER SQUARE

Piccadilly Circus and Leicester Square lie at the doorstep of The West End theaters. All the choices below (along with those in the "Covent Garden & the Strand" and "Soho" sections) are good candidates for dining before or after a show.

EXPENSIVE

Fung Shing ★★ CANTONESE In a city where the competition is stiff, Fung Shing is London's finest Cantonese restaurant. Firmly established as a culinary landmark, it dazzles with classic and nouvelle dishes. Look for the seasonal specials. Some of the dishes may be a bit experimental—notably stir-fried fresh milk with scrambled egg white—but you'll feel right at home with the soft-shell crab sautéed in a light batter and served with tiny rings of red-hot chili and deep-fried garlic. Chinese gourmets come here for the fried intestines; you may prefer the hotpot of stewed duck with yam. The spicy sea bass and the stir-fried crispy chicken are worthy choices. There are more than 150 dishes from which to choose and most are moderate in price.

15 Lisle St., WC2. ✆ **020/7437-1539.** Reservations required. Main courses £8–£26 ($16–$52). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–11:30pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

The Ivy ★★ MODERN BRITISH/INTERNATIONAL Effervescent and sophisticated, the Ivy is the dining choice of visiting theatrical luminaries ever since it opened in 1911. With its ersatz 1930s look, this place is fun and hums with the energy of London's glamour scene. The kitchen has a solid appreciation for fresh ingredients and a talent for preparation. Some appetizers may be a bit much, like wild rabbit salad with black pudding, whereas others are more appealing, such as Bang Bang chicken. The crispy duck and watercress salad is another favorite. For years, the 14-ounce Dover sole has been enjoyed by celebrities and wannabes alike. Mains feature a chargrilled fish of the day, and carnivores take to the sautéed veal kidneys or the escalope of veal Holstein. The Ivy hamburger continues to appear on the menu.

1–5 West St., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-4751.** Reservations required. Main courses £8–£40 ($16–$80); Sat–Sun fixed-price lunch £27 ($54). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm; Sun noon–3:30pm; daily 5:30pm–midnight (last order). Tube: Leicester Sq.

J. Sheekey ★ SEAFOOD English culinary tradition lives on at this fish joint, long a favorite of West End actors. The jellied eels that delighted Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh are still here, along with an array of fresh oysters from the coasts of Ireland and Brittany, plus that Victorian favorite, fried whitebait. Sheekey's fish pie is still on the menu, as is Dover sole. The old mushy peas still appear, but the chefs also offer the likes of steamed organic sea beet. Opt for the traditional dishes or specials based on the fresh catch of the day.

28–32 St. Martin's Court, WC2. ✆ **020/7240-2565.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £10–£36 ($20–$72). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 5:30pm–midnight; Sun noon–3:30pm and 6pm–midnight. Tube: Leicester Sq.

MODERATE

Randall & Aubin ★ *Finds* SEAFOOD Past the sex boutiques of Soho you stumble upon this real discovery, whose consultant is TV Chef Ed Baines, an ex-Armani model who turned this butcher shop into a cool, hip champagne-and-oyster bar. It's an ideal place to take a lover for a *Sex and the City* type of meal and some champagne or a bottle of wine. You're never rushed here. The impressive shellfish display of the night's goodies is the "bait" used to lure you inside. Chances are you won't be disappointed. Loch Fyne oysters, lobster with chips, pan-fried fresh scallops—the parade of seafood we've sampled here has in each case been genuinely excellent. The *soupe de poisson* (fish soup) is the best in Soho, or else you might want one of

the hors d'oeuvres such as delightful Japanese-style fish cakes or fresh Cornish crab. For the rare meat-only eater, there is a limited array of dishes such as a perfectly roasted chicken on the spit that has been flavored with fresh herbs.

16 Brewer St., W1. ✆ **020/7287-4447.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses £8–£12 ($16–$24). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 10am–11pm. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Sq.

INEXPENSIVE

Brown's Bar and Restaurant Covent Garden CONTINENTAL/TRADITIONAL BRITISH The decor of this popular restaurant is reminiscent of an Edwardian brasserie, with mirrors, dark-wood trim, and cream-colored walls. The staff is attentive, hysterically busy, and high spirited. The most amazing thing about the restaurant is its size. It's a cavernous labyrinth of tables complemented by a bar where (often single) patrons tend to be good-looking, happy-go-lucky, and usually up for a chat. Without ever rising to greatness, mains are well prepared and rather tasty, especially the chargrilled chicken with air-dried ham, melted Taleggio cheese, and a hollandaise sauce, and the salmon with an herby mustard crust. The braised lamb shank is another good dish, served in a beer sauce, or order whole lemon sole in a burnt butter sauce.

82–84 St. Martin's Lane, WC2. ✆ **020/7497-5050.** www.browns-restaurants.com. Reservations not needed. 2-course fixed-price pre-theater menu £13 ($26) available 4–6:30pm Mon–Sat; main courses £8.50–£22 ($17–$44). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Wed 9am–11pm; Thurs–Fri 9am–11:30pm; Sat 10am–11:30pm; Sun 10am–10:30pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

Cork & Bottle Wine Bar ★★ *Value* INTERNATIONAL Don Hewitson, a connoisseur of fine wines for more than 30 years, presides over this trove of blissful fermentation. The ever-changing wine list features an excellent selection of Beaujolais Crus from Alsace, 30 selections from Australia, 30 champagnes, and a good selection of California labels. If you want something to wash down, the most successful dish is a raised ham-and-cheese pie, with a cream cheese–like filling and crisp well-buttered pastry—not your typical quiche. There's also chicken and apple salad, black pudding, Mediterranean prawns with garlic and asparagus, and a Thai chicken wings platter.

44–46 Cranbourn St., WC2. ✆ **020/7734-7807.** Reservations not accepted after 6:30pm. Fixed-price menu £11–£14 ($22–$28); main courses £8–£13 ($16–$26). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–11:30pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

SOHO

The restaurants of Soho are conveniently located for those rushing to have dinner before an evening at one of The West End theaters.

VERY EXPENSIVE

Lindsay House ★★ MODERN BRITISH Irish-born Chef Richard Corrigan is one of our all-time favorites in London. As in an old-fashioned speak-easy, you ring the doorbell for admittance to a Regency town house deep in Soho. Corrigan is one of the most inventive chefs in London, with creative offerings changing daily based on market availability. What inspires Corrigan at the market is what will end up on your plate at night. You might start with smoked eel and foie gras terrine or else crispy frogs' legs and watercress. For your main course, expect such delights as loin of rabbit roasted and stuffed with chorizo or else stuffed pigs' trotters with sweetbreads and morels. Desserts are also a pleasant surprise, including Irish apple tart with single malt cream or a lime soufflé with Mascarpone sorbet.

21 Romilly St., W1. ✆ **020/7439-0450.** Reservations recommended. 3-course lunch £56 ($112); tasting menu with wine £68 ($136). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Mon–Sat 6–11pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

EXPENSIVE

Alastair Little ★ CONTINENTAL/MODERN BRITISH In an 1830 brick-fronted town house, this informal, cozy restaurant is a pleasant place to enjoy a well-prepared lunch or dinner. Some critics claim that Alastair Little is the best chef in London, but lately he's been buried under the avalanche of new talent. Actually, Little is not often here; the talented Sue Lewis is usually in charge. Style is modern European with a slant toward Italian. The menu changes daily. Starters are always tantalizing, including the roast pear and Pecorino cheese salad or Tuscan chestnut soup with Capezzena oil. Main dishes show skill and a wise use of market-fresh ingredients, as evoked by such dishes as roast breast and braised leg of pheasant with beet root and roast celeriac or the rump of lamb with artichokes and French beans. Roasted cod comes in a mussel sauce and is quite delightful.

49 Frith St., W1. ✆ **020/7734-5183.** Reservations recommended. Fixed-price 3-course dinner £40 ($80); fixed-price 3-course lunch £30 ($60). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Mon–Sat 6–11:30pm. Tube: Leicester Sq. or Tottenham Court Rd.

MODERATE

Annex 3 ★ FRENCH If you're hanging with Beyoncé or Scarlett Johansson, you might take either of them to this kitschy but chic rendezvous for whimsical cocktails and sophisticated, well-crafted

French food. One patron called the decor a "psychedelic Christmas show," but the food, prepared with market-fresh ingredients, is first rate, including such starters as a homemade terrine with pickled red cabbage or a salad of chicory and bitter greens in a Roquefort dressing. Exceptional products and a finely honed technique are evident in such mains as rainbow trout on braised fennel or seared duck breast with lentils and an orange jus. For dessert, few items top the dark chocolate parfait with white chocolate cream. The location is on the fringe of Soho.

16 Little Portland St., W1. ✆ **020/7631-0700.** Reservations required. 2 courses for £25 ($50); 3 courses for £29 ($58). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 7pm–midnight. Tube: Tottencourt Rd.

Chuen Cheng Ku ✪ CHINESE This is one of the finest places in Soho's New China. Chuen Cheng Ku has the longest Cantonese menu in town. Specialties include paper-wrapped prawns, rice in lotus leaves, steamed spareribs in black-bean sauce, and shredded pork with cashew nuts—all served in generous portions. Other featured dishes include lobster with ginger and spring onion, sliced duck in chili and black-bean sauce, and Singapore noodles (thin, rich noodles, mixed with curry and pork, or with shrimp and red and green pepper). Dim sum is served from 11am to 6pm. We must note, however, that the standard of service has slipped over the years.

17 Wardour St., W1. ✆ **020/7734-3281.** www.chuenchengku.co.uk. Reservations recommended on weekend afternoons. Main courses £7.80–£16 ($16–$32); fixed-price menus £9.80–£23 ($20–$46). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11am–11:45pm; Sun 11am–11:15pm. Closed Dec 24–25. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Sq.

The Criterion Brasserie ✪ FRENCH/MODERN BRITISH Designed by Thomas Verity in the 1870s, this palatial neo-Byzantine mirrored marble hall is a glamorous backdrop for a superb cuisine, served under a golden ceiling, with theatrical peacock-blue draperies. The menu is wide ranging, offering everything from Paris brasserie food to "nouvelle-classical," a combination of classic French cooking techniques with some of the lighter, more experimental leanings of modern French cuisine. The food is excellent but falls short of sublime. Start with beef carpaccio in a mustard dressing or else spaghetti with clams and chili, to be followed by such fish as wild sea bass with a shellfish fondue or else roast suckling pig in applesauce.

224 Piccadilly, W1. ✆ **020/7930-0488.** Main courses £16–£25 ($32–$50); 2-course fixed-price lunch £15 ($30); 3-course fixed-price lunch £18 ($36). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 5:30–11:30pm; Sun noon–3:30pm and 5:30–10:30pm. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

The Gay Hussar ✪ HUNGARIAN Is it still the best Hungarian restaurant in the world? That's what some say. We can't agree until we've sampled every Hungarian restaurant in the world, but we're certain Gay Hussar would be near the top. Since 1953, it's been an intimate place with authentic cuisine, a loyal clientele of politicians, and a large international following, especially among visiting Hungarians. Begin with chilled wild-cherry soup or mixed Hungarian salami. Gutsy main courses include cabbage stuffed with minced veal and rice, half a perfectly done chicken in mild paprika sauce with cucumber salad and noodles, roast duck with red cabbage and caraway potatoes, and, of course, veal goulash with egg dumplings. Expect gigantic portions. For dessert, go with either the poppy-seed strudel or the walnut pancakes.

2 Greek St., W1. ✆ **020/7437-0973.** www.gayhussar.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £9.50–£17 ($19–$34); fixed-price 2-course lunch £17 ($34); fixed-price 3-course lunch £19 ($38). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 12:15–2:30pm and 5:30–10:45pm. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

Mela ✪ *Value* INDIAN Serious foodies know you'll likely be served some of London's finest Indian cuisine at this address. The *London Evening Standard* named this the best Indian restaurant in Britain in 2004, and it is as good now as it was back then. Expect robust aromas and earthy flavors. Our spiced duck flavored with spring onions, ginger, and coriander evoked some of the best country dining in India. Eggplant came stuffed with a spicy lamb mince and was superb, as was the whole fresh fish of the day in a spicy marinade flavored with saffron and cooked whole in a charcoal oven. Tawa cookery (which in India is street food, cooked on a hot plate) is a specialty. At Mela, the fresh meats and other ingredients are cooked straight on a hot plate. Look for the chef's special Tawa dish of the day, perhaps queen prawns cooked with onions and fresh tomatoes. Save room for one of their special desserts.

152–156 Shaftesbury Ave., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-8635.** www.melarestaurant.co.uk. Reservations required. Main courses £5.95–£22 ($12–$44); 3-course fixed-price meal available before 7pm £11 ($22). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–11:30pm; Fri noon–11:45pm; Sat 1–11:45pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd. or Leicester Sq.

Rasa Samudra ✪ *Value* INDIAN This outpost offers the best southern Indian cuisine in town, and all the dishes are fish or vegetable based—no red meat or poultry. Rasa Samudra features cookery of the southern state of Kerala, focusing on specialties from the sea. Owner Das Sreedharan's mother has trained all the chefs, and the results are delectable. Try *malslam pattichathu* (kingfish cooked

in fresh spices, with green chili and coconut paste), *para konju nirachathu* (lobster cooked with black pepper, garlic, and Indian shallots, and served with whole-lemon and beet-root curry), *masala dosa* (paper-thin rice and black-grain pancakes filled with potato and ginger masala), and *moru kachlathu* (green bananas and mangoes cooked in a yogurt sauce with turmeric and onions). Rasa also offers a range of appetizers, side orders, breads, rice, and desserts. Most dishes are at the lower end of the price scale.

5 Charlotte St., W1. ✆ **020/7637-0222.** www.rasarestaurants.com. Reservations required. Main courses £5.25–£13 ($11–$26); fixed-price dinner £23–£30 ($46–$60). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–3pm and 6–11pm; Sun 6–11pm. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

Shampers CONTINENTAL This is a favorite of West End wine bar aficionados. In addition to the street-level wine bar serving snacks, there's a more formal basement-level restaurant. In either venue, you can order such main dishes as grilled calves' liver with bacon, chips, and salad; pan-fried large prawns with ginger, garlic, and chili; and platters of cheeses. Salads are popular, including grilled eggplant salad with tomato, avocado, buffalo mozzarella, and pesto; and spicy chicken salad. The platter of Irish mussels cooked in a cream-and-tarragon sauce is everybody's favorite. The wine bar also serves an extensive menu, offering fresh squid, tuna steak, pan-fried tiger prawns, free-range chicken, and other tasty specialties. There is also a daily specials menu.

4 Kingly St. (btw. Carnaby and Regent sts.), W1. ✆ **020/7437-1692.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £9–£15 ($18–$30). AE, DC, MC, V. Restaurant Mon–Sat noon–11pm. Wine bar Mon–Sat noon–11pm. Closed Dec 24–Jan 2. Tube: Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus.

INEXPENSIVE

Balans MODERN BRITISH On one of London's most gay-friendly streets, Old Compton Street, Balans is the city's best-known gay restaurant and has been since its inauguration in 1993. Some die-hard fans take all their meals here. Its extensive hours of service are almost without equal in London. Although the food is deemed "British," it is an eclectic cuisine, borrowing freely from whatever kitchen the chef chooses, from the Far East to America. For starters, try the smoked duck salad with quail eggs or pan-seared scallops with a cauliflower cheese gratin. Main dish temptations include pumpkin ravioli in a shallot and truffle sauce or swordfish steak with black-bean rice and a lime and coriander salsa. Rump of lamb is a tasty dish flavored with garlic and rosemary. Balans has a party pub atmosphere and is a good place to meet people.

60 Old Compton St., W1. ✆ **020/7439-2183.** www.balans.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8.95–£17 ($18–$34). AE, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 8am–5am; Fri–Sat 8am–6am; Sun 8am–2am. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Sq.

Ed's Easy Diner AMERICAN This is one of four branches of this popular retro American diner. It's the kind of place Michael J. Fox might have walked into in *Back to the Future.* Featuring 1950s and 1960s rock 'n' roll on the jukebox, a horseshoe-shape counter with the kitchen in the middle, and a staff that fits the theme, the restaurant offers not only good diner staples such as burgers, onion rings, waffles, corned-beef hash, and cheesecake, but also good people-watching, with a broad cross section of fashion trends on parade around the counter. The milkshakes and malts are popular items, as are the bowls of chili and five different types of fries with five sauces on the side.

12 Moor St., W1. ✆ **020/7434-4439.** www.edseasydiner.co.uk. Reservations not accepted. Main courses £5–£12 ($10–$24). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:30am–midnight. Tube: Leicester Sq. or Tottenham Court Rd.

Masala Zone *Value* INDIAN One of the best, most popular, and most affordable Indian restaurants in the heart of London is this bustling eatery, serving authentic Indian home-style cookery. There's even a food-to-go concession if you've always wanted to sample Indian street fare from vendors. Order fresh Indian lemonade or a mango and coconut Lassi while you study the menu. The noodle bowls are especially recommended, especially the chicken Madras. The specialty, though, are their *thalis,* a balanced meal on a large platter with several bowls of different dishes, including *chapattis* (freshly made bread eaten in Indian homes).

9 Marshall St., W1. ✆ **020/7287-9966.** Main courses £6.55–£12 ($13–$24). MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm and 5:30–11pm; Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–3:30pm and 6–10:30pm. Tube: Oxford Circus.

Mildreds ★ *Finds* VEGETARIAN Mildreds may sound like a 1940s Joan Crawford movie, but it's one of London's most enduring vegetarian and vegan dining spots. It was vegetarian long before such restaurants became trendy. Jane Muir and Diane Thomas worked in various restaurants together before opening their own place. Today they run a busy, bustling diner with casual, friendly service. Sometimes it's a bit crowded and tables are shared. They do a mean series of delectable stir-fries. The ingredients in their dishes are naturally grown, and they strongly emphasize the best seasonal produce. The menu changes daily but always features an array of homemade soups, casseroles, and salads. Organic wines are served, and portions are very large.

45 Lexington St., W1. ✆ **020/7494-1634.** www.mildreds.co.uk. Reservations not accepted. Main courses £6.50–£8.75 ($13–$18). No credit cards. Mon–Sat noon–11pm. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

MODERATE

The National Dining Rooms TRADITIONAL BRITISH In the National Gallery, this dining choice lies over the foyer of the Sainsbury Wing, providing a panoramic view of fabled Trafalgar Square. The location and setting here are the chief lures, and the view is more memorable than the cuisine. Classic starters include warm watercress mousse with braised pearl onions or smoked mackerel pâté with apple and chicory. Try main dishes such as monkfish, mullet, and mussel stew or else baked lemon chicken with Savoy cabbage and creamed potatoes. The cheese selection from Great Britain is amazing in its variety, everything from traditionally aged Stilton to soft goat's cheese from the Cotswolds. There is a cafe offshoot in the basement of the main building, which is a good choice for sandwiches, pastas, soups, and pastries.

In the National Gallery, Trafalgar Sq., WC2. ✆ **020/7747-2525.** Reservations not required. 2-course menu £25 ($50); 3-course menu £30 ($60). AE, MC, V. Daily 10am–5:30pm; Wed 10am–8:45pm. Tube: Charing Cross.

The Portrait Restaurant ★ MODERN BRITISH This rooftop restaurant is a sought-after dining ticket on the fifth floor of the National Portrait Gallery's Ondaatje Wing. Along with the view (Nelson's Column, the London Eye, Big Ben, and the like), you get superb meals. Patrons usually go for lunch, not knowing that the chefs also cook on Thursday and Friday nights. All the main courses are filled with flavor. The high quality of the produce really shines through in such dishes as roast breast of guinea fowl with truffles and wild mushrooms or pan-fried filet of Scotch salmon with bacon-and-onion potato cakes. For your "pudding," nothing is finer than steamed chestnut and honey pudding with toffee and pecan sauce. Chefs aren't afraid of simple preparations mainly because they are assured of the excellence of their products. The wine list features some organic choices.

In the National Portrait Gallery, Trafalgar Sq., WC2. ✆ **020/7312-2490.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £14–£29 ($28–$58). AE, MC, V. Daily 11:45am–2:45pm; Thurs–Fri 5:30–8:30pm. Tube: Leicester Sq. or Charing Cross.

MAYFAIR

VERY EXPENSIVE

Gordon Ramsay at Claridge's ★★★ EUROPEAN Gordon Ramsay is the hottest chef in London today, also going strong at his Chelsea restaurant, called Gordon Ramsay (p. 92). He now rules at the staid, traditional hotel of Claridge's, legendary since 1860 when Queen Victoria took tea with the Empress Eugenie. Most definitely Victoria wasn't served an *amuse-bouche* of pumpkin soup dribbled with truffle oil and studded with truffles. Although the menu changes frequently, a memorable culinary highlight began with such starters as crispy Gloucester pork belly with sautéed langoustines, purée of Savoy cabbage, and quail's eggs. Whoever thought celeriac risotto with toasted pine nuts and Parmesan Reggiano could taste so good? Dishes, including steamed sea bass with roasted salsify and vanilla *jus* or braised Cornish turbot with Oscietra caviar and coriander sauce, are constantly changing and always inventive. A rich, meaty dish—perhaps to be appreciated by a budding Henry VIII—is West Country pork cheeks cooked in honey and cloves and served with braising juices.

Brook St., W1. ✆ **020/7499-0099.** www.gordonramsay.com/claridges. Reservations required as far in advance as possible. Fixed-price lunch £30 ($60); a la carte menu £70 ($140); 6-course fixed-price dinner £75 ($150). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:45pm and 5:45–11pm; Sat–Sun noon–3pm; Sat 5:45–11pm; Sun 6–10:30pm. Tube: Bond St.

Le Gavroche ★★★ FRENCH Although challengers come and go, this luxurious "gastro-temple" remains the number-one choice in London for classical French cuisine. There's always something special coming out of the kitchen of Michel Roux, Jr., the son of the chef who founded the restaurant in 1966. The service is faultless, and the ambience formally chic without being stuffy. The menu changes constantly, depending on the current inspiration of the chef. But it always remains classically French, though not old-fashioned. Signature dishes honed over years of unswerving practice include the town's grandest cheese soufflé (Soufflé Suissesse); warm foie gras with crispy, cinnamon-flavored crepes; and Scottish filet of beef with port-wine sauce and truffled macaroni. Depending on availability, game is often served as well. A truly Gallic dish is the cassoulet of snails with frog thighs or the mousseline of lobster in a champagne sauce.

43 Upper Brook St., W1. ✆ **020/7408-0881.** Fax 020/7491-4387. Reservations required as far in advance as possible. Main courses £30–£50 ($60–$100); fixed-price lunch £48 ($96); *Le Menu Exceptional* £95 ($190) without wine, £150 ($300) with wine. AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2pm and 6:30–11pm; Sat 6:30–11pm. Tube: Marble Arch.

Nobu ✪✪ JAPANESE/SOUTH AMERICAN This innovative restaurant, a celebrity haunt, owes much to its founders, actor Robert De Niro and Chef Nobu Matsuhisa. The kitchen staff is brilliant and as finely tuned as their New York counterparts. Those on the see-and-be-seen circuit don't seem to mind the high prices that go with these incredibly fresh dishes. Elaborate preparations lead to perfectly balanced flavors. Where else can you find an excellent sea urchin tempura? Salmon tartare with caviar is a brilliant appetizer. Follow with a perfectly done filet of sea bass in a sour bean paste or soft-shell crab rolls. The squid pasta is sublime, as is sukiyaki; the latter dish is incredibly popular and with good reason.

In the Metropolitan Hotel, 19 Old Park Lane, W1. ✆ **020/7447-4747.** Reservations required 1 month in advance. Main courses £15–£24 ($30–$48); sushi and sashimi £5–£11 ($10–$22) per piece; fixed-price lunch menu £25 ($50); fixed-price dinner menu £70 ($140). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:15pm; Sat–Sun 12:30–2:30pm; Mon–Thurs 6–10:15pm; Fri–Sat 6–11pm; Sun 6–9:45pm. Tube: Hyde Park Corner.

Sketch ✪✪ CONTINENTAL/MODERN BRITISH In a converted 18th-century building in Mayfair, Mourad ("Momo") Mazouz, along with a team of chefs and designers, mastermind this fashionable creation. You can come here to dine elegantly but also to barhop, as Sketch is actually a number of venues that, to confuse matters, change their agendas as the day progresses. For example, one section is an art gallery by day and "gastro-brasserie" by night. Whimsical and informal, the Parlour is for light lunches and delectable teas. In the Lecture Room and Library, each dish represents different sensations. The Art Gallery becomes a restaurant and bar at night. The East Bar is a popular late-night rendezvous, and the Glade is open for lunches and light snacks.

The menu showcases a cuisine that is both bold and imaginative—and also delicious. For starters, you get not only fresh Tsarskaya oysters, but they also come with lemon, shallots, vinegar, and warm rye-bread pudding. The fresh pumpkin soup is always invigorating. Well-flavored, tender lamb is served with a beet-root cake, white cabbage, and dried fruits, and the roasted and caramelized baby tuna comes with steamed zucchini, red pepper, celery leaves, and toasted sesame seeds.

9 Conduit St., W1. ✆ **087/0777-4488.** www.sketch.uk.com. Reservations essential for dining. Main courses £15–£30 ($30–$60); snacks and small meals £8–£24 ($16–$48). Lecture Room and Library 3-course fixed-price dinner £35 ($70); 7-course vegetarian fixed-price dinner £65 ($130). Art Gallery Mon–Sat 7pm–2am (last food order 11pm Mon–Wed and 1am Thurs–Sat). Lecture Room and Library Tues–Fri noon–2:30pm, Tues–Sat 6:30–10:30pm. Parlour Mon–Fri 8am–9pm, Sat

10am–9pm. The Glade Mon–Sat noon–3pm. East Bar daily 6:30pm–2am. AE, MC, V. Tube: Oxford Circus.

The Square ★★★ FRENCH Hip, chic, casual, sleek, and modern, the Square still doesn't scare Le Gavroche as a competitor for first place on London's dining circuit, but it is certainly a restaurant to visit on a serious London gastronomic tour. Chef Philip Howard delivers the goods at this excellent restaurant. You get creative, personalized cuisine in a cosseting atmosphere with abstract modern art on the walls. The chef has a magic touch, with such concoctions as a starter of terrine of partridge with smoked foie gras and pear with cider jelly or else a lasagna of Cornish crab with a champagne foam. For a main course we urge you to try the peppered aged rib-eye of Ayrshire beef with smoked shallots, Tuscan snails, and a red-wine sauce, or else the roast saddle of hare with port-glazed endive. The fish dishes such as steamed turbot with buttered langoustine claws and poached oysters are always fresh, and Bresse pigeon is as good as it is in its hometown in France.

6–10 Bruton St., W1. ✆ **020/7495-7100.** Reservations required. Fixed-price lunch £25–£30 ($50–$60); dinner £65 ($130). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Mon–Sat 6:30–10:45pm; Sun 6:30–10pm. Tube: Bond St. or Green Park.

EXPENSIVE

Maze ★★ INTERNATIONAL Gordon Ramsay is the leading chef of London. But our nomination for the most promising chef is Jason Atherton, a one-time protégé of Ramsay. Atherton learned his master's secrets and has plenty of creative culinary imagination all on his own. One reviewer claimed Atherton combined "Spain's progressive technique with Gallic voluptuousness and a dash of British wit." And so he does. His combinations may sound a bit bizarre, but the resulting flavors and ingredients taste sublime.

He's a chef that appeals to "grazers" (that is, those diners liking a series of small plates or tapas). The changing seasons are reflected by what rests on your plate. In a New York–inspired interior by the American architect David Rockwell, Atherton enthralls with dish after dish. Take his starters. Go for the Orkney scallops roasted with spices and served with a peppered golden raisin purée or else the foie gras marinated in pinot noir. For a main, we'd recommend the roasted partridge with plum preserves or the roast Scottish filet of beef with Landes foie gras and an ox-cheek cottage pie.

10–13 Grosvenor Sq., W1. ✆ **020/7107-0000.** Reservations required. Fixed-price lunch £29–£43 ($58–$86); main dishes (small platters) £15–£30 ($30–$60). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–2:30pm and 6–10:30pm. Tube: Bond St.

Scott's ✪✪ SEAFOOD In business after a long slumber, Scott's has regained its position as one of London's great seafood restaurants. Opened as an oyster warehouse in 1851 by a young fishmonger, John Scott, the restaurant first earned its fame at its Haymarket site where it rested until 1968. Now filled with cosmopolitan glitter in Mayfair, it doesn't rest on its long-ago fame but has made its reputation anew.

Once a favorite of Ian Fleming, creator of the James Bond character, it was the setting in the '50s and '60s where he discovered the dry martini—"shaken, not stirred." It is dear to the seafood lover's heart, from market-fresh Dover sole to "cockles and mussels." Always ask about the fresh catch of the day or else order filet of halibut with chervil butter or Scottish lobster thermidor. There's rib steak for the meat eater, even braised pork cheeks.

20 Mount St., W1. ✆ **020/7495-7309.** Reservations required. Main courses £16–£40 ($32–$80). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–10:30pm; Sun noon–10pm. Tube: Green Park or Bond St.

Tamarind ✪ INDIAN In favor with critics as well as the lunchtime business crowd, Tamarind is the most popular Indian restaurant in Mayfair. The basement dining room has gold pillars and a tandoor window so that you can watch the chefs pull their flavorful dishes from the ovens. Chef Alfred Prasad leads a culinary brigade from Delhi that maintains the style of cooking they knew at home. The team selects the best, freshest ingredients in the markets each day. The kitchen prides itself on nouvelle dishes but also excels at traditional Indian fare. The monkfish in saffron and yogurt is delectable, and the mixed kabob platter, with all the kabobs cooked in a charcoal-fired tandoor, is extraordinary—these chefs are the kings of kabobs. Your best bet for a curry? Opt for the prawns in a five-spice mixture. Vegetarians will find refuge here, especially if they go for the *dal Bukhari,* a black-lentil specialty of northwest India.

20 Queen St., W1. ✆ **020/7629-3561.** Reservations required. Main courses £16–£26 ($32–$52); fixed-price dinner menu £24 ($48); 3-course fixed-price lunch £22 ($44). AE, DC, DISC, MC, V. Sun–Fri noon–2:45pm; Mon–Sat 6–11:30pm; Sun 6:30–10:30pm. Tube: Green Park.

MODERATE

Langan's Brasserie FRENCH/TRADITIONAL BRITISH In its heyday in the early 1980s, this was one of the hippest restaurants in London, and the upscale brasserie still welcomes an average of 700 diners a day. The 1976 brainchild of actor Michael Caine and chef Richard Shepherd, Langan's sprawls over two noisy floors filled with

potted plants and ceiling fans that create a 1930s feel. The menu is "mostly English with a French influence," and includes spinach soufflé with anchovy sauce, quail eggs in a pastry case served with a sautéed hash of mushrooms and hollandaise sauce, and prawn salad with Marie-Rose sauce. There's also a selection of English pub fare, including bangers and mash, and fish and chips. The dessert menu is a journey into nostalgia: bread-and-butter pudding, treacle tart with custard, apple pie with clotted cream . . . wait, how did mango sorbet slip in here?

Stratton St., W1. ✆ **020/7491-8822.** www.langansrestaurants.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £14–£20 ($28–$40). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs 12:15–11pm; Fri 12:15–11:30pm; Sat 12:30–11:30pm. Tube: Green Park.

Zen Central CANTONESE/INDIAN/SZECHUAN Movie stars always seem to have an advance scouting party informing them of the best places to dine in a foreign city. So when we heard that Eddie Murphy and Tom Cruise were heading here, we followed. We didn't spot any stars, but we found a designer-chic Mayfair restaurant with a cool, dignified decor in black and white. Mirrors cover much of the interior. (Maybe that's why movie stars like it?)

Served by a competent staff, the cuisine is first rate. Start with the soft-shell crabs cooked in a crust of salt. The steamed sea bass is perfectly cooked and, for extra flavor, served with a black-bean sauce. Pork chops with lemon grass have a Thai flavor, and the baked lobster with crushed roast garlic and slivers of tangerine peel is worth a trip from anywhere. Vegetarian meals are also available. The chef's braised fish cheeks, sharks' fins, and bird's-nest soup serve up flavors enjoyed in China.

20 Queen St., W1. ✆ **020/7629-8103.** Reservations recommended. Fixed-price menus £35 ($70); main courses £11–£20 ($22–$40). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily 12:15–11:15pm. Tube: Green Park.

INEXPENSIVE

Automat ★ AMERICAN The famous faces who flocked to this Mayfair eatery when it opened aren't seen too much anymore, but a clientele of Yankees patronizes the modern precincts, enjoying everything from macaroni and cheese to a soft-shell po'boy sandwich with fries. Some of the best U.S. beef in London is also offered, including New York strip sirloin. London food critics have called it "Mayfair's slice of the Big Apple," after digging into the crab cakes with guacamole or the chili con carne. Salad is a wedge of iceberg lettuce with blue cheese dressing. Perhaps the most popular item on the menu is the Automat hamburger with fries.

33 Dover St., W1. ✆ **020/7499-3033.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £12–£17 ($24–$34). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 7–11am and noon–3pm; Sat–Sun 11am–4pm; Mon–Sat 6–11pm. Tube: Green Park.

Leon ★ *Value* MEDITERRANEAN Its biggest fans call it "gourmet fast food." While gourmet it is not, this is a great place to just sit and eat without being rushed during a day of shopping on Oxford Street. It does what its nearby competitors don't do: It produces fresh, wholesome food at affordable prices. Everything is freshly cooked and that means certain dishes may be variable, but we find ourselves returning in spite of a flaw here and there. Everything on the menu is fresh, often organic. The freshly made salads, chicken nuggets, and hearty stews are good. The nuggets are made with succulent breast meat and doused in a creamy yogurt and garlic sauce. Even the chili con carne is different. It's a bowl of spicy, tender minced beef with black kidney beans, and is served with a fluffy organic brown rice speckled with pumpkin, sunflower, and sesame seeds, and accompanied by a tasty cabbage and beet slaw. Your drink of choice might be a ginger and carrot juice. Save room for the chocolate brownie, just like Mama used to make. The brownie is "zinged" up with orange zest and swaddled in sinful scoops of ice cream made from Jersey cream. Leon is also the best place in the area for breakfast—try the organic porridge.

35 Great Marlborough St., W1. ✆ **020/7437-5280.** Reservations not required. Breakfast from £4.50 ($9); main courses £5.10–£6.50 ($10–$13). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri 8am–10:30pm; Sat 9:30am–10:30pm; Sun 10:30am–6:30pm. Tube: Oxford Circus.

ST. JAMES'S

MODERATE

Greens Restaurant & Oyster Bar INTERNATIONAL/SEAFOOD/TRADITIONAL BRITISH Critics say it's a triumph of tradition over taste, but as far as seafood in London goes, this is a tried-and-true favorite, thanks to an excellent menu with moderately priced dishes, a central location, and a charming staff. This place has a cluttered entrance leading to a crowded bar where you can sip fine wines and, from September to April, enjoy oysters. The oyster bar is run by Simon Parker-Bowles, Camilla's ex-brother-in-law. In the faux-Dickensian dining room, you can choose from a long menu of fresh seafood dishes, which changes monthly depending on what is in season. Starters are vibrant, yet earthy fare, including Dorset crab salad, potted shrimp with whole meal toast, and pan-fried foie gras with apple purée. The chefs are at the top of their form in turning out such mains as seafood platters, filet of halibut with a mussel

veloute, or grilled Dover sole with hollandaise sauce. Meat dishes are also superb, including rump of lamb with roast garlic polenta or steak tartare.

36 Duke St., St. James's, SW1. ✆ **020/7930-4566.** www.greens.org.uk. Reservations required. Main courses £13–£38 ($26–$76); most dishes are moderately priced. AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–3pm and 5:30–11pm; Sun noon–3pm and 5:30–9pm (closed Sun May–Aug). Tube: Green Park.

3 Westminster & Victoria

MODERATE

Rex Whistler ★★ *Value* MODERN BRITISH The Tate Britain's restaurant is particularly attractive to wine fanciers. It offers what may be the best bargains for superior wines anywhere in Britain. Bordeaux and burgundies are in abundance, and the management keeps the markup between 40% and 65%, rather than the 100% to 200% added in most restaurants. In fact, the prices here are lower than they are in most wine shops. Wine begins at £15 ($30) per bottle, or £4 ($8) per glass. Oenophiles frequently come for lunch. The restaurant offers an English menu that changes about every month. Dishes might include pheasant casserole, pan-fried skate with black butter and capers, and vegetarian selections. One critic found the staff and diners as traditional "as a Gainsborough landscape." Access to the restaurant is through the museum's main entrance on Millbank.

Tate Britain, Millbank, SW1. ✆ **020/7887-8825.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £15 ($30); breakfast from £4.75 ($9.50); afternoon tea £6.95 ($14). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 11:30am–3pm; Sat–Sun 10am–3pm; daily 3:30–5pm for afternoon tea. Tube: Pimlico. Bus: 77 or 88.

INEXPENSIVE

Jenny Lo's Teahouse CANTONESE/SZECHUAN London's noodle dives don't get much better than this. Before its decline, Ken Lo's Memories of China offered the best Chinese dining in London. The late Ken Lo, whose grandfather was the Chinese ambassador to the Court of St. James, made his reputation as a cookbook author. Jenny Lo is Ken's daughter, and her father taught her many of his culinary secrets. Belgravia matrons and young professionals come here for perfectly prepared, reasonably priced fare. Ken Lo cookbooks contribute to the dining room decor of black refectory tables set with paper napkins and chopsticks. Opt for such fare as a vermicelli rice noodle dish (a large plate of noodles topped with grilled chicken breast and Chinese mushrooms) or white noodles with minced pork. Rounding out the menu are stuffed Peking dumplings, chili-garnished spicy prawns, and wonton soup with slithery

dumplings. The black-bean-seafood noodle dish is a delight, as is the chili beef soup.

14 Eccleston St., SW1 9LT. ✆ **020/7259-0399.** Reservations not accepted. Main courses £6.50–£10 ($13–$20). No credit cards. Mon–Fri noon–3pm; Mon–Sat 6–10pm. Tube: Victoria Station.

4 Knightsbridge to South Kensington

KNIGHTSBRIDGE

VERY EXPENSIVE

Zafferano ✪✪ ITALIAN There's something honest and satisfying about this restaurant, where decor consists of little more than ocher-colored walls, immaculate linens, and a bevy of diligent staff members. A quick review of past clients includes Margaret Thatcher, Richard Gere, Princess Margaret, and Eric Clapton. The modernized interpretation of Italian cuisine features such dishes as ravioli of pheasant with black truffles, wild pigeon with garlic purée, sea bream with spinach and balsamic vinegar, and monkfish with almonds. Other choice dishes include linguine with lobster and fresh tomatoes or a crayfish risotto. The owners pride themselves on one of the most esoteric and well-rounded collections of Italian wine in London: You'll find as many as 20 different vintages each of Brunello and Barolo and about a dozen vintages of Sassecaia.

15 Lowndes St., SW1. ✆ **020/7235-5800.** www.zafferanorestaurant.com. Reservations required. Main courses £15–£40 ($30–$80); set-price lunch menu £30–£40 ($60–$80); set-price dinner menu £35–£55 ($70–$110). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm; Sat–Sun 12:30–3pm; daily 7–11pm (until 10:30pm on Sun). Tube: Knightsbridge.

MODERATE

Black and Blue ✪ STEAK The atmosphere is marvelously informal, the prices affordable, and the steaks of high quality, each from a traditionally reared, grass-fed Scottish cow. Take your pick—Scottish sirloin, rib-eye, T-bone. We especially like the *cote de boeuf,* a hefty rib of beef for two to share. The sauces served with the steaks are divine. Burgers, chargrilled chicken, and fish dishes are also on offer on the changing menu, even freshly made salads and platters for the vegetarian.

215–217 Kensington Church St., W8. ✆ **020/7727-0004.** www.blackandblue.biz. Reservations required. Main courses £9–£25 ($18–$50). MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–11pm; Fri–Sat noon–11:30pm. Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

The Collection ✪ INTERNATIONAL/MODERN BRITISH This is a temple to voyeurism and the vanities, catering to the aesthetics and preoccupations of the fashion industry. It occupies an

echoing warehouse; the only access is by a 9m (30-ft.) catwalk that feels like it should have couture models striding along it. Yummy menu items include appetizers like Thai-spiced chicken and coconut soup, and artichoke hearts salad with fresh fennel and Pecorino cheese, followed by such mains as grilled tiger prawns in coriander oil with couscous, and honey-roasted duck with Asian pear and bok choi. You might also order the grilled swordfish with pickled Asian vegetables, followed by such desserts as banana tarte tatin, and English strawberries with mascarpone. Don't overlook this place as a stop on your after-dark barhop.

264 Brompton Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7225-1212.** www.the-collection.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £15–£56 ($30–$112); early-dinner 3-course menu Mon–Fri 6–7:15pm £40–£48 ($80–$96). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 6–11:30pm. Tube: South Kensington.

INEXPENSIVE

Le Metro INTERNATIONAL Located just around the corner from Harrods, Le Metro draws a fashionable crowd to its basement precincts. The place serves good, solid, reliable food prepared with flair. The menu changes frequently. You might choose the homemade soup of the day with freshly baked bread or the twice-baked cheese soufflé with an arugula salad as your starting point. For a main, opt for such dishes as salmon fish cakes with horseradish mayonnaise or else pork, leek, and herb sausages with red-onion gravy.

28 Basil St., SW3. ✆ **020/7589-6286.** Main courses £9–£11 ($18–$22). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat 8am–10pm; Sun 8am–4pm. Tube: Knightsbridge.

CHELSEA

VERY EXPENSIVE

Gordon Ramsay ★★★ *Finds* FRENCH One of the city's most innovative and talented chefs is Gordon Ramsay. All of London is rushing to sample Mr. Ramsay's wares, and he has had to turn away some big names. The Queen hasn't been denied a table yet, but that's only because she hasn't called.

Every dish from this kitchen is gratifying, reflecting subtlety and delicacy without any sacrifice to the food's natural essence. Try, for example, Ramsay's celebrated cappuccino of white beans with grated truffles. His appetizers are likely to dazzle: salad of crispy pigs' trotters with calves' sweetbreads, fried quail eggs and a cream vinaigrette, or foie gras three ways—sautéed with quince, *mi-cuit* with an Earl Grey consommé, or pressed with truffle peelings. From here, you can grandly proceed to the main courses, including oven-roasted pigeon from Anjou wrapped in Parma ham with foie gras or else pan-fried filets of John Dory with crab and caviar.

68 Royal Hospital Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7352-4441.** www.gordonramsay.com/royalhospitalroad. Reservations essential (1 month in advance). Fixed-price 3-course lunch £40 ($80); 3-course dinner £85 ($170); 7-course dinner £110 ($220). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6:30–11pm. Tube: Sloane Sq.

Roussillon ★★ FRENCH In a quiet corner of Pimlico, near Sloane Square, British produce meets a French chef. The rage of trendy Chelsea, Roussillon serves a cuisine called "vegecentric," featuring 7-course tasting menus, each a delight. No one seems to prepare fresh vegetables in London better than chef Alexis Gauthier, who changes his menu twice a season, using local ingredients whenever possible.

Roast monkfish is served with braised chicory, and meat choices include a sublime filet of beef with purple artichokes. You might settle for one of the French cheese board selections at the end of the meal, but few can resist the Louis XV praline concoction, using Weiss chocolate from St-Etienne.

16 St. Barnabas St., SW1. ✆ **020/7730-5550.** Reservations required. Set lunch £38 ($76); set dinner £50 ($100); tasting menus £58–£68 ($116–$136). AE, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30; Mon–Sat 6:30–10:30pm. Tube: Sloane Sq.

INEXPENSIVE

The Pig's Ear ★ *Finds* BRITISH TRADITIONAL The staff is still talking about the surprise visit of Prince William—he may be heir to one of the world's most fabled fortunes, but at the end of the evening here he split the bill among his friends, paying only his fair share at this, one of the best gastro-pubs in Chelsea. It might be called the Pig's Ear, but it's really the silk purse when it comes to food. Start with such dishes as Jerusalem artichoke soup with truffle oil or chicken livers flavored with sherry vinegar. Other dishes include seared tuna with black olives and chicory or else foie gras ballantine with an onion marmalade. In honor of its namesake, the chefs deep-fry pigs' ears. Filet of sea bass appears with beet root and baby leeks, and a roast wood pigeon is stuffed with garlic-laced portobello mushrooms. The atmosphere is friendly and unpretentious in either the ground floor pub area or in the wood-paneled restaurant upstairs.

35 Old Church St., SW3. ✆ **020/7352-2908.** Reservations required in restaurant. Main courses £7.25–£18 ($15–$36). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–11pm; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: Sloane Sq.

KENSINGTON & SOUTH KENSINGTON

VERY EXPENSIVE

Tom Aikens ★★★ CONTINENTAL The amazingly skilled Tom Aikens is one of the truly top-flight Gallic chefs of London. Aikens certainly was trained well, working in Paris under Joël Robuchon

during the time he was proclaimed as France's greatest chef. Aikens also ran the prestigious Pied-à-Terre in London. In elegant surroundings in chic Knightsbridge, the food is basically a modern interpretation of high French cuisine, with a great deal of flourish and some very elaborately worked dishes.

Regardless of the contrast in ingredients, main courses show harmony and cohesion, as exemplified by the poached sea bass with saffron risotto and a bouillabaisse sauce. Everything sounds like an unlikely combination, but the end result is most satisfying. The menu's most voluptuous side is evoked by braised suckling pig with roasted fresh almonds, apple purée, and a pork lasagna.

43 Elystan St., Knightsbridge, SW3. ✆ **020/7584-2003.** Reservations required. Fixed-price lunch £29 ($58); fixed-price dinner £65 ($130); tasting menu £80 ($160). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 6:45–11pm. Tube: South Kensington.

EXPENSIVE

Bibendum/The Oyster Bar ★ FRENCH/MEDITERRANEAN In trendy Brompton Cross, this still-fashionable restaurant occupies two floors of a garage that's now an Art Deco masterpiece. Though its heyday came in the early 1990s, the white-tiled room with stained-glass windows, lots of sunlight, and a chic clientele, is still an extremely pleasant place. The eclectic cuisine, known for its freshness and simplicity, is based on what's available seasonally. Dishes might include roast pigeon with celeriac purée and apple sauté, rabbit with artichoke and parsley sauce, or grilled lamb cutlets with a delicate sauce. Some of the best dishes are for splitting between two people, including Bresse chicken flavored with fresh tarragon, and grilled veal chops with truffle butter. Simpler meals and cocktails are available in the **Oyster Bar** on the building's street level. The bar-style menu stresses fresh shellfish presented in the traditional French style, on ice-covered platters adorned with strands of seaweed. It's a crustacean-lover's dream.

81 Fulham Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7581-5817.** Reservations required in Bibendum; not accepted in Oyster Bar. Main courses £18–£25 ($36–$50); 2-course fixed-price lunch £24 ($48); 3-course fixed-price lunch £29 ($58); cold seafood platter in Oyster Bar £57 ($114) for 2. AE, DC, MC, V. Bibendum Mon–Fri noon–2:30pm and 7–11:30pm, Sat–Sun 12:30–3pm and 7–11:30pm. Oyster Bar Mon–Sat noon–11pm, Sun noon–11:30pm. Tube: South Kensington.

Clarke's ★ MODERN BRITISH Sally Clarke is one of the finest chefs in London, and this is one of the hottest restaurants around. *Still.* She opened it in the Thatcher era, and it's still going strong. In this excellent restaurant, everything is bright and modern, with wood floors, discreet lighting, and additional space in the basement

where tables are more spacious and private. Some people are put off by the fact that there is only a fixed-price menu, but the food is so well prepared that diners rarely object to what ends up in front of them. The menu, which changes daily, emphasizes chargrilled foods with herbs and seasonal veggies. You might begin with an appetizer salad of blood orange with red onions, watercress, and black olive–anchovy toast; then follow that with roasted breast of chicken with black truffle, crisp polenta, and arugula.

124 Kensington Church St., W8. ✆ **020/7221-9225.** Reservations recommended. Main course lunch £14–£16 ($28–$32); 3-course dinner £43 ($86); 4-course dinner £50 ($100); Sat brunch £10–£14 ($20–$28). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 12:30–2pm and 7–10pm; Sat brunch 11am–2pm and dinner 7–10pm. Tube: High St. Kensington or Notting Hill Gate.

MODERATE

Admiral Codrington ★ *Finds* CONTINENTAL/MODERN BRITISH Once a lowly pub, this stylish bar and restaurant is now all the rage. The exterior has been maintained, but the old "Cod," as it is affectionately known, has emerged to offer plush dining with a revitalized decor by Nina Campbell and a glass roof that rolls back on sunny days. The bartenders still offer a traditional pint, but the sophisticated menu features such delectable fare as grilled calves' liver and crispy bacon, or pan-fried rib-eye with a truffled horseradish cream. Opt for the charbroiled tuna with eggplant caviar and a red-pepper vinaigrette.

17 Mossop St., SW3. ✆ **020/7581-0005.** Reservations recommended. Main courses £15–£30 ($30–$60). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 11:30am–midnight; Sun noon–10:30pm. Tube: South Kensington.

Joe's Café ★ *Finds* ITALIAN One of three London restaurants established by fashion designer Joseph Ettedgui, it's often filled at breakfast and lunch with well-known names from the British fashion and entertainment industries, thanks to its sense of glamour and fun. No one will mind if your meal is composed exclusively of appetizers. There's a bar near the entrance, a cluster of tables for quick meals near the door, and more leisurely (and gossipy) dining available in an area a few steps up. The atmosphere remains laid-back and unstuffy, just as trendsetters in South Ken prefer it. With a name like Joe's, what else could it be? You can sample such starters as crab ricotta pancake with orange dressing and baby spinach or a goat terrine with cherry tomato marmalade. Main dish allures include homemade pappardelle with a wild rabbit ragout and Pecorino cheese, and a lamb shank in a red-wine sauce. A specialty is chargrilled lobster with king prawns, squid, and langoustines with a tomato concasse.

126 Draycott Ave., SW3. ✆ **020/7225-2217.** Reservations required on weekdays, not accepted on weekends. Main courses £9–£28 ($18–$56). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 10am–6pm and 7–10:30pm; Sun 10:30am–5:30pm. Tube: South Kensington.

5 Marylebone to Notting Hill Gate

MARYLEBONE

EXPENSIVE

Assaggi ★ *Finds* ITALIAN You wouldn't think of heading to the second floor of a very ordinary pub in Bayswater for fine Italian cuisine, but we urge you to do so in this case to sample Chef Nino Sassu's take on Italian classics, especially those from the south. Serious London foodies have discovered this low-key venue, and flock here for food prepared with flair and passion, using market-fresh and top-quality ingredients.

The chef sets out to prove that straightforward dishes can often be the best when simply handled. Grilled Mediterranean vegetables in virgin olive oil and fresh herbs are an always winning appetizer, followed by such mains as grilled seabass or filet of pork with black truffles. The menu is short but long on flavor if you try such dishes as a butter and sage ravioli, tender calves' liver, or pannacotta.

39 Chepstow Place, W2. ✆ **020/7792-9033.** Reservations required. Main courses £18–£24 ($36–$48). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 12:30–2:30pm and 7:30–11pm. Tube: Bayswater.

MODERATE

Bush Bar & Grill ★ *Finds* FRENCH/MODERN BRITISH Hip, lighthearted, and sought after by the quasi-celebrities of London's world of media and entertainment, this bar and brasserie was established in 2000 by the owners of the city's most exclusive private clubs, Woody's and the Groucho Club. Both of these are membership-only venues in other parts of town. At the tables near you at this spin-off restaurant (not a members-only spot), you're likely to see members of those clubs plus celebs like Jerry Hall, Kate Moss, cookbook author Nigella Lawson, pop singer Kylie Minogue, and writers from such publications as *British Vogue* and *Tatler*. The setting was originally conceived as a milk-bottling plant, but since a team of decorators revamped it, it evokes an arts-conscious Manhattan bistro with a neoindustrial decor, exposed air ducts, and a busy kitchen that's open to view. Chefs here place an emphasis on organic produce, preparing dishes that include starters like wild boar and foie gras terrine with apple chutney, and stuffed baby squid with anchovies. For a main dish, try the roast rack of lamb with Rösti potatoes or braised mussels in cider with smoked bacon and thyme.

45a Goldhawk Rd., W12 8QP. ✆ **020/8746-2111.** www.bushbar.co.uk. Reservations required. Main courses £8.95–£17 ($18–$34); fixed-price menus served at lunch (daily) and dinner (Mon–Sat) until 7:30pm £23–£27 ($46–$54). AE, MC, V. Mon–Wed noon–11pm; Thurs noon–midnight; Fri–Sat noon–1am; Sun noon–6pm. Tube: Goldhawk Rd.

Galvin ★ FRENCH Evoking the fabled bistros of Paris, this Gallic-inspired *bistro de luxe* has brought foodies to the once gastro wasteland along Baker Street of Sherlock Holmes fame. Chris and Jeff Galvin, two brothers, provide straightforward French cuisine at a decent price (at least for London). The French classics appear in full-flavored combinations using the finest of seasonal ingredients.

In an unpretentious setting, you can dine on a superb *soupe de poisons* (fish soup) or a classic endive salad with Roquefort, pear, and walnuts. That old-fashioned starter, salad of poached lamb's tongue with sauce ravigote, also appears on the menu. For robust eaters, there is an array of such dishes as roasted veal brains in *beurre noisette,* part of a platter that also includes roast rump of veal and melt-in-the-mouth braised cheeks.

6 Baker St., W1. ✆ **020/7935-4007.** Reservations required. Main courses £13–£18 ($26–$36); fixed-price menu £18 ($36). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–2:30pm and 6–11pm; Sun noon–9:30pm. Tube: Baker St.

Langan's Bistro FRENCH/TRADITIONAL BRITISH This unpretentious bistro is still around—although perhaps it's not quite the happening scene it was when actor Sir Michael Caine founded it back in the 1960s. Of the restaurants in this chain (see Langan's Brasserie, p. 87), it's the least expensive but the most visually appealing. Set behind a brightly colored storefront, the dining room is decorated with clusters of Japanese parasols, mirrors, surrealistic paintings, and old photographs. The menu is "mostly English with a French influence." Dishes change with the seasons but might include such starters as roast figs and goat cheese tart with walnut salad or sardines in sauce. Main courses include salmon with a cucumber and chili salsa, a confit of duck with stir-fry vegetables, and Italian beef tartare with new potatoes. Longtime brasserie favorites like mussels marinara, barbecued spareribs, and baked salmon in pastry are reassuringly familiar and as good as they ever were. Check out the dish of the day. Chocoholics should finish off with the extravaganza known as "Mrs. Langan's Chocolate Pudding." Only fixed-price menus are served here.

26 Devonshire St., W1. ✆ **020/7935-4531.** www.langansrestaurants.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Fixed-price 2-course lunch or dinner £20 ($40), 3 courses £22 ($44). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 12:30–2:30pm; Mon–Sat 6:30–11pm. Tube: Regent's Park or Baker St.

Mash ★ *Finds* CONTINENTAL What is it, you ask? A bar? A deli? A microbrewery? Actually, it's all of the above, plus a restaurant. Breakfast and weekend brunch are the highlights, but don't ignore dinner. The owners of the hot Atlantic Bar & Grill have opened this "sunken chill-out zone" created by leading designer John Currin. The atmosphere is trendy, hip, breezy, and arty. The novelty decor includes curvy sci-fi lines that might remind you of a *Star Trek* set, and lizard-eye lighting fixtures, but ultimately the food is the attraction.

We were won over by such mains as a range of burgers, including one made with lamb and served with goat cheese. You might also be happily surprised by the risotto Parmigiana or the ragout of veal shank. A pan-fried halibut steak is served with wild mushrooms, beans, and truffle oil.

19–21 Great Portland St., W1. ✆ **020/7637-5555.** Reservations required. Main courses £12–£23 ($24–$46); set-price lunch or dinner £26–£33 ($52–$66). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Fri 8–11:30am, noon–3pm, and 6–11pm; Sat 6–11pm. Tube: Oxford Circus.

PADDINGTON & BAYSWATER

EXPENSIVE

Royal China ★ *Kids* CANTONESE/SZECHUAN Unexpectedly delightful Cantonese and Szechuan specialties are available at this popular eatery, a family favorite. Come here for the best dim sum in London. Forget the garish decor and concentrate on what's on your plate—you'd probably have to go to Hong Kong to find Chinese cooking as authentic as this. The eight-page menu is overwhelming in its choices, and many of the classic dishes are known only to true students of Chinese cuisine. We were delighted by the Shanghai dumplings, steamed on one side and sautéed on the other. Various whole ducks and chickens are prepared with skill passed down through centuries. We noticed a table of London Chinese raving about the jellyfish with sesame oil, although we opted for the sautéed prawns with fresh mango.

13 Queensway, W2. ✆ **020/7221-2535.** www.royalchinagroup.co.uk. Reservations recommended. Main courses £8–£32 ($16–$64); fixed-price dinner £30–£38 ($60–$76). AE, DC, MC, V. Mon–Thurs noon–11pm; Fri–Sat noon–11:30pm; Sun 11am–10pm. Tube: Bayswater or Queensway.

MODERATE

Halepi ★ *Finds* CYPRIOT/GREEK Run by the Kazolides family since 1966, this establishment is hailed by the *Automobile Association of America Guide* as the best Greek restaurant in the world. Despite its reputation, the atmosphere is informal, with rows of brightly clothed tables, *bouzouki* background music, and a large native Greek clientele. Portions are generous. Menu items rely heavily on lamb

and include kabobs, *klefticon* (baby lamb prepared with aromatic spices), moussaka (minced lamb and eggplant with béchamel sauce), and *dolmades* (vine leaves stuffed with lamb and rice). Other main courses include scallops; sea bass; Scottish halibut; huge Indonesian shrimp with lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, and spring-onion sauce; and *afelia* (filet of pork cooked with wine and spices, served with potatoes and rice). The homemade baklava is recommended for dessert. Most dishes are moderate in price.

18 Leinster Terrace, W2. ✆ **020/7262-1070.** www.halepi.co.uk. Reservations required. Main courses £5.75–£29 ($12–$58). AE, DC, MC, V. Daily noon–12:15am. Closed Dec 25–26. Tube: Queensway.

Veronica's ★★ *Finds* TRADITIONAL BRITISH Called the "market leader in cafe salons," Veronica's offers traditional—and historical—fare at prices you won't mind paying. It's a celebration of British cuisine over a 2,000-year period, with dishes based on medieval, Tudor, and even Roman-era recipes. The chef gives these traditional dishes imaginative, modern twists. One month she'll focus on Scotland, while the next she'll concentrate on Victorian foods, dishes from Wales, or an all-Irish menu, and so on. You might start with a carrot tart perfumed with orange-flavored water and served with a minted pea purée based on an Irish recipe from 1746. Or else try the deviled whitebait with a tartare dip (deviling became popular in the 19th century and, of course, whitebait has been eaten since medieval times, when it was caught in the Thames). Main dishes might include lamb marinated in milk and honey and roasted in red wine (based on an ancient Roman recipe).

3 Hereford Rd., W2. ✆ **020/7229-5079.** www.veronicasrestaurant.co.uk. Reservations required. Main courses £13–£15 ($26–$30). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat 6–10:30pm; Sun 6–10pm. Tube: Bayswater.

NOTTING HILL GATE

EXPENSIVE

The Ledbury ★★ EUROPEAN Australian-born Brett Graham deserves his culinary acclaim. As befits a chef born down under, he subtly incorporates Asian staples such as shiso and soy into his cookery. He's not a fancy, prissy chef, but likes to gut a squid and other such horrors. No one makes better roasted scallops with licorice than he does. His ballotine of foie gras with a refreshing date purée is about the best version of this starter you are likely to have. Save room for his eggplant braised with miso and garlic, or his ravioli of chicken and morels in a white asparagus fondue. He's also skilled at fish,

especially his monkfish roasted with fresh rosemary. For dessert, we'd recommend the date-and-vanilla tart.

127 Ledbury Rd., W11. ✆ **020/7792-9090.** Reservations recommended. Set lunch £26–£56 ($52–$112) Mon–Sat, £32–£56 ($64–$112) Sun; set dinner £48–£58 ($96–$116). AE, DC, MC. Daily noon–2:45pm and 6:30–10:30pm. Tube: Westbourne Park.

MODERATE

The Cow ★ *Finds* MODERN BRITISH You don't have to be a young fashion victim to enjoy the superb cuisine served here (although many of the diners are). Tom Conran (son of entrepreneur Sir Terence Conran) holds forth in this increasingly hip Notting Hill Gate watering hole. It looks like an Irish pub, but the accents you'll hear are "trustafarian" rather than street-smart Dublin. With a pint of Fuller's or London Pride, you can linger over the modern European menu, which changes daily but is likely to include ox tongue poached in milk; mussels in curry and cream; or a mixed grill of lamb chops, calves' liver, and sweetbreads. The seafood selections are delectable. "The Cow Special"—a half-dozen Irish rock oysters with a pint of Guinness or a glass of wine for £11 ($22)—is the star of the show. A raw bar downstairs serves other fresh seafood choices.

89 Westbourne Park Rd., W2. ✆ **020/7221-0021.** Reservations required. Main courses £16–£20 ($32–$40). MC, V. Daily noon–midnight. Tube: Westbourne Grove.

INEXPENSIVE

Prince Bonaparte INTERNATIONAL This offbeat restaurant serves great pub grub in what used to be a grungy boozer before Notting Hill Gate became fashionable. Now pretty young things show up, spilling onto the sidewalk when the evenings are warm. The pub is filled with mismatched furniture from schools and churches; and CDs of jazz and lazy blues fill the air, competing with the babble. It may seem at first that the staff doesn't have its act together, but once the food arrives, you won't care—the dishes served here are very good. The menu roams the world for inspiration: Moroccan chicken with couscous is as good or better than any you'll find in Marrakech, and the seafood risotto is delicious. Roast lamb, tender and juicy, appears on the traditional Sunday menu. We recommend the London Pride or Grolsch to wash it all down.

80 Chepstow Rd., W2. ✆ **020/7313-9491.** Reservations not required. Main courses £8–£10 ($16–$20). AE, MC, V. Mon–Sat noon–10:30pm. Tube: Notting Hill Gate or Westbourne Park.

4 Exploring London

Dr. Samuel Johnson said, "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life, for there is in London all that life can afford." It would take a lifetime to explore every alley, street, and square in this city. Since you don't have a lifetime to spend, we've chosen the best London has to offer.

For visitors, the question is not what to do, but what to do first. "The Top Attractions" section, below, should help.

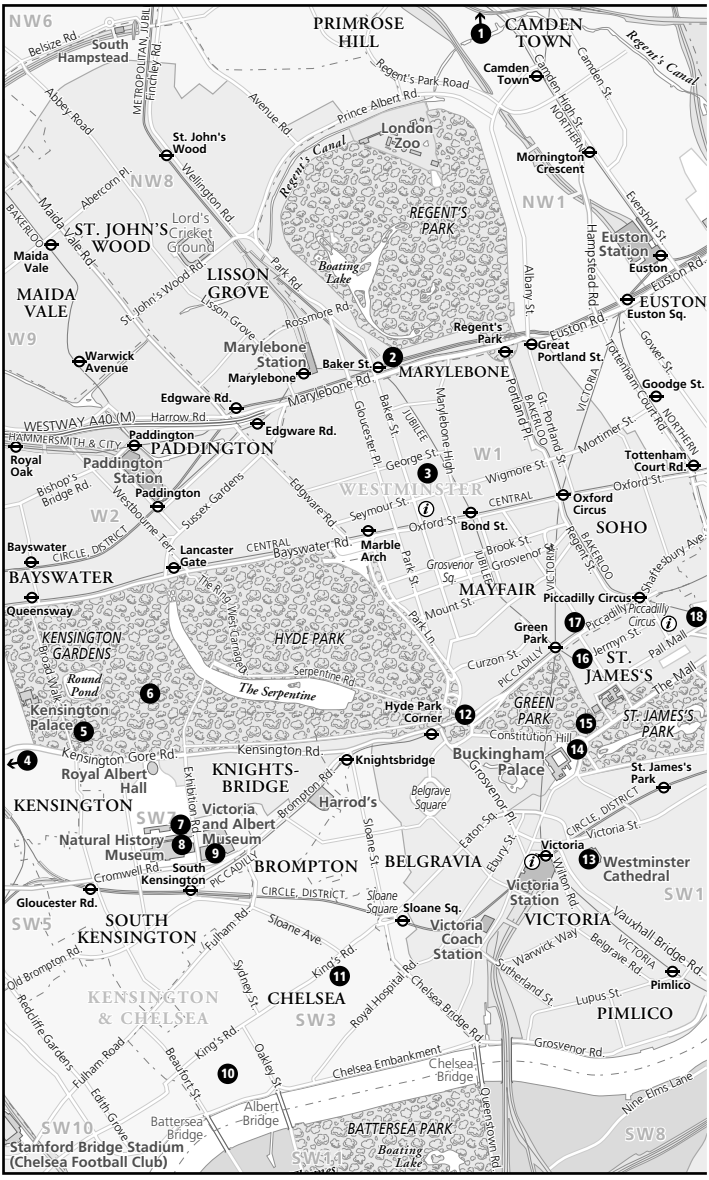
A note about admission and open hours: In the listings below, children's prices generally apply to those 16 and under. To qualify for a senior discount, women must be 60 or older, men, 65 or older. Students must present a student ID to get discounts, where available. In addition to closing on bank holidays, many attractions close around Christmas and New Year's (and, in some cases, early in May), so always call ahead if you're visiting in those seasons. All museums are closed Good Friday, December 24 through December 26, and New Year's Day.

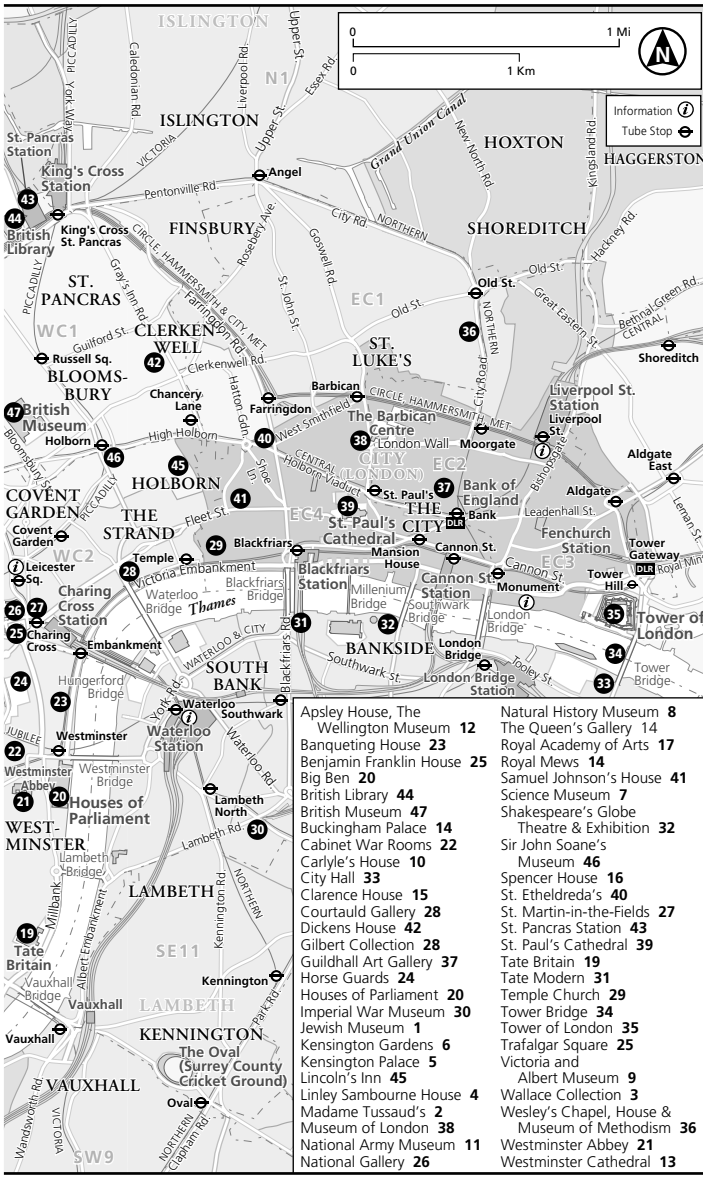
1 The Top Attractions

British Museum ★★★ Set in scholarly Bloomsbury, this immense museum grew out of a private collection of manuscripts purchased in 1753 with the proceeds of a lottery. It grew and grew, fed by legacies, discoveries, and purchases, until it became one of the most comprehensive collections of art and artifacts in the world. It's impossible to take in this museum in a day.

The museum is divided basically into the national collections of antiquities; prints and drawings; coins, medals, and bank notes; and ethnography. Even on a cursory first visit, be sure to see the Asian collections (the finest assembly of Islamic pottery outside the Islamic world), the Chinese porcelain, the Indian sculpture, and the prehistoric and Romano-British collections. Special treasures you might want to seek out on your first visit include the **Rosetta Stone,** in the Egyptian Room, the discovery of which led to the deciphering of

London Attractions

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BLOOMSBURY
HOLBORN
EC2
CITY OF LONDON
COVENT GARDEN
THE STRAND
WC2
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CITY
SOUTH BANK
BANKSIDE
WEST-MINSTER
LAMBETH
SE11
KENNINGTON
VAUXHALL
SW9
King's Cross Station
St. Pancras Station
British Library
British Museum
Russell Sq.
Holborn
Chancery Lane
Farringdon
Barbican
Angel
Old St.
Moorgate
Liverpool St. Station
Shoreditch
Aldgate
Aldgate East
Bank of England
Bank
St. Paul's
St. Paul's Cathedral
Blackfriars
Mansion House
Cannon St.
Cannon St. Station
Monument
Tower Hill
Tower Gateway
Fenchurch Station
Leadenhall St.
Tower of London
Tower Bridge
London Bridge
London Bridge Station
Southwark Bridge
Millenium Bridge
Blackfriars Bridge
Blackfriars Station
Temple
Embankment
Charing Cross Station
Leicester Sq.
Covent Garden
Hungerford Bridge
Waterloo Bridge
Waterloo Station
Waterloo Southwark
Westminster
Westminster Abbey
Houses of Parliament
Lambeth North
Lambeth Bridge
Vauxhall
Tate Britain
Kennington
The Oval (Surrey County Cricket Ground)
Oval
Pentonville Rd.
City Rd.
Old St.
Great Eastern St.
Hackney Rd.
Kingsland Rd.
Bethnal Green Rd.
Upper St.
Essex Rd.
Caledonian Rd.
Liverpool Rd.
Grand Union Canal
New North Rd.
Goswell Rd.
Rosebery Ave.
St. John St.
Farringdon Rd.
Clerkenwell Rd.
Guilford St.
Gray's Inn Rd.
Hatton Gdn.
Shoe La.
Fleet St.
High Holborn
Bloomsbury St.
Barbican
Chancery Lane
Holborn Viaduct
Ludgate Hill
Bishopsgate
Leman St.
Victoria Embankment
Waterloo & City
Jubilee
Northern
Circle, Hammersmith & City, Met
Central
Piccadilly
Victoria
Kennington Rd.
Park Rd.
Wandsworth Rd.
Clapham Rd.
Millbank
Albert Embankment
Lambeth Rd.
Waterloo Rd.
Blackfriars Rd.
Southwark St.
Tooley St.
Cannon St.
Queen Victoria St.
Upper Thames St.
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Apsley House, The Wellington Museum 12
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Gilbert Collection 28
Guildhall Art Gallery 37
Horse Guards 24
Houses of Parliament 20
Imperial War Museum 30
Jewish Museum 1
Kensington Gardens 6
Kensington Palace 5
Lincoln's Inn 45
Linley Sambourne House 4
Madame Tussaud's 2
Museum of London 38
National Army Museum 11
National Gallery 26
Natural History Museum 8
The Queen's Gallery 14
Royal Academy of Arts 17
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Samuel Johnson's House 41
Science Museum 7
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Sir John Soane's Museum 46
Spencer House 16
St. Etheldreda's 40
St. Martin-in-the-Fields 27
St. Pancras Station 43
St. Paul's Cathedral 39
Tate Britain 19
Tate Modern 31
Temple Church 29
Tower Bridge 34
Tower of London 35
Trafalgar Square 25
Victoria and Albert Museum 9
Wallace Collection 3
Wesley's Chapel, House & Museum of Methodism 36
Westminster Abbey 21
Westminster Cathedral 13

hieroglyphics; the **Parthenon Sculptures,** a series of pediments, metopes, and friezes from the Parthenon in Athens, in the Duveen Gallery; and the legendary **Black Obelisk,** dating from around 860 B.C., in the Nimrud Gallery. Other treasures include the contents of Egyptian royal tombs (including mummies); fabulous arrays of 2,000-year-old jewelry, cosmetics, weapons, furniture, and tools; Babylonian astronomical instruments; and winged lion statues (in the Assyrian Transept) that guarded Ashurnasirpal's palace at Nimrud. The exhibits change throughout the year, so if your heart is set on seeing a specific treasure, call to make sure it's on display.

Insider's Tip: If you're a first-time visitor, you will, of course, want to concentrate on some of the fabled treasures previewed above. But what we do is duck into the British Museum several times on our visits to London, even if we have only an hour or two, to see the less-heralded but equally fascinating exhibits. We recommend wandering rooms 33 and 34, and 91 to 94, to take in the glory of the Orient, covering Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The Chinese collection is particularly strong. Sculpture from India is as fine as anything at The Victoria and Albert. The Mexican Gallery in room 33C traces that country's art from the 2nd millennium B.C. to the 16th century A.D. A gallery for the North American collection is also nearby. Another section of the museum is devoted to the **Sainsbury African Galleries** ★, one of the finest collections of African art and artifacts in the world, featuring changing displays selected from more than 200,000 objects. Finally, the Money Gallery in room 68, traces the story of (what else?) money. You'll learn that around 2000 B.C. in Mesopotamia, grain was used as currency, and that printed money came into being in the 10th century in China.

The museum's inner courtyard is now canopied by a lightweight, transparent roof, transforming the area into a covered square that houses a Centre for Education, exhibition space, bookshops, and restaurants. The center of the Great Court features the Round Reading Room, which is famous as the place where Karl Marx hung out while writing *Das Kapital.*

Finally, a ***warning:*** Watch your wallets when you're standing in crowds, particularly in front of the Rosetta Stone. The museum is free and tends to attract a few grab-happy drifters. For information on the British Library, see p. 130.

Great Russell St., WC1. ✆ **020/7323-8299** or 020/7636-1555 for recorded information. www.britishmuseum.org. Free admission. Sat–Wed 10am–5:30pm; Thurs–Fri 10am–8:30pm. Tube: Holborn, Tottenham Court Rd., Goodge St., or Russell Sq.

Tips Timesaver

With 4km (2½ miles) of galleries, the **British Museum** is overwhelming. To get a handle on it, we recommend taking a 1½-hour overview tour for £8 ($16), £5 ($10) for students and children 10 and under, daily at 10:30am, 1pm, or 3pm. Afterward, you can return to the galleries that most interest you. If you have limited time to spend on the museum, concentrate on the Greek and Roman rooms (nos. 11–23, 69–73, and 77–85), which hold the golden hoard of booty both bought and stolen from the Empire's once far-flung colonies. For information on the British Library, see p. 130.

Buckingham Palace ★★ *Kids* This massive, graceful building is the official residence of the Queen. The redbrick palace was built as a country house for the notoriously rakish Duke of Buckingham. In 1762, King George III, who needed room for his 15 children, bought it. It didn't become the official royal residence, though, until Queen Victoria took the throne; she preferred it to St. James's Palace. From George III's time, the building was continuously expanded and remodeled, faced with Portland stone, and twice bombed (during the Blitz). Located in a 16-hectare (40-acre) garden, it's 108m (354 ft.) long and contains 600 rooms. You can tell whether the Queen is at home by checking to see if the Royal Standard is flying from the mast outside. For most of the year, you can't visit the palace without an official invitation. Since 1993, though, much of it has been open for tours during an 8-week period in August and September, when the royal family is usually vacationing outside London. Elizabeth II agreed to allow visitors to tour the State Room, the Grand Staircase, the Throne Room, and other areas designed by John Nash for George IV, as well as the Picture Gallery, which displays masterpieces by Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Rubens, and others. You have to buy a timed-entrance ticket the same day you plan to tour the palace. Tickets go on sale at 9am, but rather than lining up at sunrise with all the other tourists—this is one of London's most popular attractions—book by phone with a credit card and give yourself a few more hours of sleep.

During the 8 weeks of summer, visitors are also allowed to stroll through the royal family's garden, along a 4.5km (2.75-mile) walk

Tips The Guard Doesn't Change Every Day

The schedule for the Changing of the Guard ceremony is variable, at best. In theory, at least, the guard is changed daily from May to mid-July, at which time it goes on its "winter" schedule—that is, alternating days. Always check locally with the tourist office to see if it's likely to be staged at the time of your visit. The ceremony has sometimes been cut at the last minute, leaving thousands of visitors feeling they have missed out on a London must-see (though we say it's overrated anyway).

on the south side of the grounds, with views of a lake and the usually off-limits west side of the palace. The garden is home to 30 types of birds, plus 350 varieties of wildflowers.

Buckingham Palace's most famous spectacle is the vastly overrated **Changing of the Guard** (daily Apr–July and on alternating days for the rest of the year). The new guard, marching behind a band, comes from either the Wellington or Chelsea barracks and takes over from the old guard in the forecourt of the palace. The ceremony begins at 11:30am, although it's frequently canceled because of bad weather, state events, and other, harder-to-fathom reasons. We like the changing of the guard at Horse Guards better (p. 126) because you can actually see the men marching and you don't have to battle such tourist hordes. However, few first-time visitors will resist the lure of the Buckingham Palace Changing of the Guard. If that includes you, arrive as early as 10:30am and claim territorial rights to a space in front of the palace. If you're not firmly anchored here, you'll miss much of the ceremony.

At end of the Mall (on the road running from Trafalgar Sq.). ✆ **020/7766-7300.** www.royalcollection.org.uk. Palace tours £15 ($30) adults, £14 ($28) over 60 and students, £8.50 ($17) ages 5–16, free for ages 4 and under. Family ticket £39 ($78). Changing of the Guard free. July 26–Sept 24 (dates can vary), and additional dates may be added. Daily 9:45am–6pm. Changing of the guard daily from Apr–July at 11:30am and alternating days for the rest of the year at 11am. Tube: St. James's Park, Green Park, or Victoria.

Clarence House ★★ From 1953 until her death in 2002, the Queen Mother lived at Clarence House in a wing of St. James's Palace. It was constructed between 1825 and 1927 to the designs of John Nash. Today it is the official residence of the Prince of Wales, and is open to the public only during a specified period of the year

(see below). The present Queen Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh lived here following their marriage in 1947.

After the death of the Queen Mother, the house was refurbished and redecorated with antiques and art from the royal collection. Visitors are taken on a guided tour of five of the staterooms, where much of the Queen's collection of art and furniture is on display, along with pieces added by Prince Charles. The Queen Mother had an impressive collection of 20th-century British art, including works by John Piper, Augustus John, and Graham Sutherland. She also was known for her superb collection of Fabergé and English porcelain and silver, especially pieces from her family collection (the Bowes-Lyon family).

Stable Yard Gate, SW1. ✆ **020/7766-7303.** www.royal.collection.org.uk. Admission £7.50 ($15) adults, £6.50 ($13) seniors and students, £4 ($8) ages 5–16, free for children 4 and under. Aug 1–Sept 30 (dates subject to change—call first) daily 10am–5:30pm. Tube: Green Park or St. James's Park.

Houses of Parliament & Big Ben ★★ The Houses of Parliament, along with their trademark clock tower, Big Ben, are the ultimate symbols of London. They're the strongholds of Britain's democracy, the assemblies that effectively trimmed the sails of royal power. Both the House of Commons and the House of Lords are in the former royal Palace of Westminster, which was the king's residence until Henry VIII moved to Whitehall. The current Gothic Revival buildings date from 1840 and were designed by Charles Barry. (The earlier buildings were destroyed by fire in 1834.) There are more than 1,000 rooms and 3km (1¾ miles) of corridors. The clock tower at the eastern end houses the world's most famous timepiece. **"Big Ben"** refers not to the clock tower itself, but to the largest bell in the chime, which weighs close to 14 tons and is named for the first commissioner of works, Sir Benjamin Hall.

You may observe debates for free from the **Stranger's Galleries** in both houses. Sessions usually begin in mid-October and run to the end of July, with recesses at Christmas and Easter. The chances of getting into the House of Lords when it's in session are generally better than for the more popular House of Commons. Although we can't promise you the oratory of a Charles James Fox or a William Pitt the Elder, the debates in the House of Commons are often lively and controversial. (Seats are at a premium during crises.)

Those who'd like to book a tour can do so, but it takes a bit of work. Both houses are open to the general public for guided tours only for a limited season in July and August. The palace is open

Monday, Tuesday, Friday, and Saturday from 9:15am to 4:30pm during those times. All tour tickets cost £12 ($24) adult; £8 ($16) seniors, students, and children 4 to 16; and £30 ($60) family ticket. Children 3 and under may enter for free. For advance tickets call ✆ **08709/063773.**

If you arrive just to attend a session, these are free. You line up at Stephen's Gate, heading to your left for the entrance into the Commons or to the right for the Lords. The London daily newspapers announce sessions of Parliament.

Insider's Tip: The hottest ticket and the most exciting time to visit is during "Prime Minister's Question Time" on Wednesdays, which is only from noon to 12:30pm, but which must seem like hours to the prime minister, who is on the hot seat, exchanging barbs with the MPs (members of Parliament). Foreign and Commonwealth visitors should apply to their embassy or High Commission in the U.K. for a card of introduction, which will normally permit entry around 11:30am. Embassies and High Commissions may issue no more than four cards on any day, so visitors from certain countries may find cards are booked for several weeks ahead. Please note that such cards do not guarantee entry. Quite often, it will not be possible to admit their bearers until *after* Question Time. British embassies abroad do not issue such cards.

Across the street is the **Jewel Tower** ✪, Abingdon Street (✆ **020/7222-2219**), one of only two surviving buildings from the medieval Palace of Westminster. It was constructed in 1365 as a place where Edward III could stash his treasure-trove. The tower hosts an exhibition on the history of Parliament and makes for a great introduction to the inner workings of the British government. The video presentation on the top floor is especially informative. A touch-screen computer allows visitors to take a virtual tour of both houses of Parliament.

Westminster Palace, Old Palace Yard, SW1. House of Commons ✆ **020/7219-4272.** House of Lords ✆ **020/7219-3107.** www.parliament.uk. Free admission. House of Lords mid-Oct to Aug Mon–Wed from 2:30pm, Thurs from 11am, and sometimes Fri (check by phone). House of Commons mid-Oct to Aug Mon 2:30–10:30pm, Tues–Wed 11:30am–7:30pm, Thurs 11:30am–6pm, Fri not always open—call ahead. Both houses are open for tours (see above). Join line at St. Stephen's entrance. Jewel Tower £2.90 ($5.80) adults, £2.20 ($4.40) students and seniors, £1.50 ($3) children. Daily 10am–5pm Apr–Oct, 10am–4pm Nov to Mar. Tube: Westminster.

Kensington Palace ✪ *Kids* Once the residence of British monarchs, Kensington Palace hasn't been the official home of reigning

kings since George II, who died in 1760. William III and Mary II acquired it in 1689 to escape the damp royal rooms along the Thames. Since the end of the 18th century, the palace has housed various members of the royal family, and the State Apartments are open for tours.

It was here in 1837 that a young Victoria was awakened with the news that her uncle, William IV, had died and she was now the Queen of England. You can view a collection of Victoriana here, including some of her memorabilia. In the apartments of Queen Mary II is a striking 17th-century writing cabinet inlaid with tortoiseshell. Paintings from the Royal Collection line the walls. A rare 1750 lady's court dress and splendid examples of male court dress from the 18th century are on display in rooms adjacent to the State Apartments, as part of the Royal Ceremonial Dress Collection, which features royal costumes dating as far back as 200 years.

Kensington Palace was the London home of the late Princess Margaret, and is the current home of the Duke and Duchess of Kent. The palace was also the home of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her two sons. (William and Harry now live with their father at St. James's Palace.) The palace is probably best known for the millions of flowers placed in front of it during the days following Diana's death. The former apartment of the late Princess Margaret has opened to the public as an education center and an exhibition space for royal ceremonial dress.

Warning: You don't get to see the apartments where Princess Di lived or where both Di and Charles lived until they separated. Many visitors think they'll get to peek at these rooms and are disappointed. Charles and Di lived on the west side of the palace, still occupied today by minor royals.

The **Kensington Gardens** are open to the public for leisurely strolls through the manicured grounds and around the Round Pond. One of the most famous sights is the controversial Albert Memorial, a lasting tribute not only to Victoria's consort, but also to the questionable artistic taste of the Victorian era. There's a wonderful afternoon tea offered in the Orangery.

The Broad Walk, Kensington Gardens, W8. ✆ **0870/7515-170.** Admission £12 ($24) adults, £10 ($20) seniors and students, £10 ($20) children 5–15, £34 ($68) family ticket. Mar–Oct daily 10am–6pm; Nov–Feb daily 10am–5pm. Tube: Queensway or Notting Hill Gate; High St. Kensington on south side.

Fun Fact Trafalgar: London's Most Famous Square

London is a city full of landmark squares. Without a doubt, the best-known is **Trafalgar Square** ★★ (www.london.gov.uk/trafalgarsquare; Tube: Charing Cross), which honors one of England's great military heroes, Horatio Viscount Nelson (1758–1805). Although he suffered from seasickness, he went to sea at the age of 12 and was an admiral by age 39. Nelson was a hero of the Battle of Calvi in 1794, where he lost an eye; the Battle of Santa Cruz in 1797, where he lost an arm; and the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, where he lost his life. He is also famous for his affair with Lady Hamilton, the subject of books and films (including *That Hamilton Woman,* with Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh).

The square is dominated by the 44m (144-ft.) granite *Nelson's Column,* built by E. H. Baily in 1843. The column looks down Whitehall toward the Old Admiralty, where Lord Nelson's body lay in state. The figure of the naval hero towers 5m (16 ft.) high—not bad for a man who stood 5′4″ in real life. The capital is of bronze, cast from cannons recovered from the wreck of the *Royal George,* which sank in 1782. Queen Victoria's favorite animal painter, Sir Edward Landseer, added the four lions at the base of the column in 1868. The pools and fountains weren't added until 1939; they were the last work of Sir Edwin Lutyens.

National Gallery ★★★ This stately neoclassical building contains an unrivaled collection of Western art spanning 7 centuries—from the late 13th to the early 20th—and covering every great European school. For sheer skill of display and arrangement, it surpasses its counterparts in Paris, New York, Madrid, and Amsterdam.

The largest part of the collection is devoted to the Italians, including the Sienese, Venetian, and Florentine masters. They're now housed in the Sainsbury Wing, which was designed by noted architects Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, and opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1991. On display are such works as Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks;* Titian's *Bacchus and Ariadne;* Giorgione's *Adoration of the Magi;* and unforgettable canvases by Bellini, Veronese, Botticelli, and Tintoretto. Botticelli's *Venus and Mars* is eternally enchanting.

Political demonstrations take place in the square and around the column, which has the most aggressive pigeons in London. Much of the world focuses on the square via TV cameras on New Year's Eve, as revelers jump into the chilly waters of the fountains. The Christmas tree that's installed here every December is a gift from Norway to the British people, in appreciation of Britain's sheltering the Norwegian royal family during World War II. The tree is surrounded by carolers most December evenings. Year-round, street performers (now officially licensed) entertain in hopes of receiving a token of appreciation for their efforts.

To the southeast of the square, at 36 Craven St., stands a house that was occupied by Benjamin Franklin from 1757 to 1774. On the north side of the square rises the National Gallery, constructed in the 1830s. In front of the building is a copy of a statue of George Washington by J. A. Houdon.

To the left of St. Martin's Place is the National Portrait Gallery, a collection of portraits of famous Brits—from Chaucer and Shakespeare to Nell Gwynne, Margaret Thatcher, and Lady Diana. Also on the square is the steeple of St. Martin–in-the-Fields, the final resting place of Sir Joshua Reynolds, William Hogarth, and Thomas Chippendale.

Of the early Gothic works, the Wilton Diptych (French or English school, late 14th c.) is the rarest treasure; it depicts Richard II being introduced to the Madonna and Child by John the Baptist and the Saxon kings, Edmund and Edward the Confessor. Then there are the Spanish giants: El Greco's *Agony in the Garden* and portraits by Goya and Velázquez. The Flemish-Dutch school is represented by Bruegel, Jan van Eyck, Vermeer, Rubens, and de Hooch; the Rembrandts include two of his immortal self-portraits. None of van Eyck's art creates quite the stir that the **Arnolfini Portrait** does. The stunning work depicts Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his wife (who is not pregnant, as is often thought; she is merely holding up her full-skirted dress in the contemporary fashion). There's also an immense French Impressionist and post-Impressionist collection

that includes works by Manet, Monet, Degas, Renoir, and Cézanne. Particularly charming is the peep-show cabinet by Hoogstraten in one of the Dutch rooms: It's like spying through a keyhole.

British and modern art are the specialties of the Tate Gallery (p. 114), but the National Gallery does have some fine 18th-century British masterpieces, including works by Hogarth, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Constable, and Turner.

Guided tours of the National Gallery are offered twice daily, with an extra tour on Wednesday. A Gallery Guide Soundtrack is also available. A portable CD player provides audio information on paintings of your choice with the mere push of a button. Although this service is free, contributions are appreciated.

Insider's Tip: The National Gallery has a computer information center where you can design your own personal tour map for free. The computer room, located in the Micro Gallery, includes a dozen hands-on workstations. The online system lists 2,200 paintings and has background notes for each work. Using a touch-screen computer, you can design your own personalized tour by selecting a maximum of 10 paintings you would like to view. Once you have made your choices, you print a personal tour map with your selections.

N. side of Trafalgar Sq., WC2. ✆ **020/7747-2885.** www.nationalgallery.org.uk. Free admission. Thurs–Tues 10am–6pm; Wed 10am–9pm. Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Sq.

National Portrait Gallery ★★ In a gallery of both remarkable and unremarkable portraits (they're collected for their subjects rather than their artistic quality), a few paintings tower over the rest, including Sir Joshua Reynolds's first portrait of Samuel Johnson ("a man of most dreadful appearance"), Nicholas Hilliard's miniature of handsome Sir Walter Raleigh, a full-length of Elizabeth I, and a Holbein cartoon of Henry VIII. There's also a portrait of William Shakespeare (with a gold earring) by an unknown artist that bears the claim of being the "most authentic contemporary likeness" of its subject. One of the most famous pictures in the gallery is the group portrait of the Brontë sisters (Charlotte, Emily, and Anne) by their brother, Bramwell. An idealized portrait of Lord Byron by Thomas Phillips is also on display.

The galleries of Victorian and early-20th-century portraits were radically redesigned. Some of the more flamboyant personalities of the past 2 centuries are on show: T. S. Eliot; Disraeli; Macmillan; Sir Richard Burton (the explorer, not the actor); Elizabeth Taylor; and our two favorites, G. F. Watts's famous portrait of his great actress wife, Ellen Terry, and Vanessa Bell's portrait of her sister, Virginia

Woolf. Perhaps not surprisingly, a portrait of the late Princess Diana on the Royal Landing seems to attract the most viewers.

In 2000, Queen Elizabeth opened the Ondaatje Wing of the gallery, increasing the gallery's exhibition space by more than 50%. The most intriguing new space is the splendid Tudor Gallery, featuring portraits of Richard III and Henry VII. There's also a portrait of Shakespeare that the gallery acquired in 1856. A Balcony Gallery taps into the cult of celebrity, displaying more recent figures whose fame has lasted longer than Warhol's 15 minutes. These include everybody from Mick Jagger to Joan Collins, and, of course, the Baroness Thatcher. The Gallery operates a cafe and art bookshop.

St. Martin's Place, WC2. ✆ **020/7306-0055.** www.npg.org.uk. Free admission; fee charged for certain temporary exhibitions. Sat–Wed 10am–6pm; Thurs–Fri 10am–9pm. Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Sq.

St. Paul's Cathedral ★★★ During World War II, newsreel footage reaching America showed St. Paul's Cathedral standing virtually alone among the rubble of the City, its dome lit by fires caused by bombings all around it. That the cathedral survived at all is a miracle, since it was badly hit twice during the early years of the bombardment of London. But St. Paul's is accustomed to calamity, having been burned down three times and destroyed by invading Norsemen. The old St. Paul's was razed during the Great Fire of 1666, making way for a new structure designed by Sir Christopher Wren and built between 1675 and 1710. The cathedral is architectural genius Wren's ultimate masterpiece.

The classical dome of St. Paul's dominates the City's square mile. The golden cross surmounting it is 110m (361 ft.) above the ground; the golden ball on which the cross rests measures 2m (6½ ft.) in diameter, though it looks like a marble from below. In the interior of the dome is the **Whispering Gallery,** an acoustic marvel in which the faintest whisper can be heard clearly on the opposite side. Sit on one side, have your traveling companions sit on the other, and whisper away. You can climb to the top of the dome for a 360-degree view of London. A second steep climb leads from the Whispering Gallery to the **Stone Gallery,** which opens onto a panoramic view of London. Another 153 steps take you to the **Inner Golden Gallery,** situated at the top of the inner dome. Here an even more panoramic view of London unfolds.

St. Paul's Churchyard, EC4. ✆ **020/7246-8350.** www.stpauls.co.uk. Cathedral and galleries £9.50 ($19) adults, £8.50 ($17) seniors and students, £3.50 ($7) children 6–16, £23 ($46) family ticket. Guided tours £3 ($6) adults, £2.50 ($5) seniors and students, £1 ($2) children 6–16; recorded tours £3.50 ($7), free for children 5 and

Moments Roses Are Red

One of the most enjoyable activities of a spring visit to London is a stroll through the gardens of St. Paul's when the roses are in bloom.

under. Cathedral (excluding galleries) Mon–Sat 8:30am–4pm; galleries Mon–Sat 9:30am–4pm. No sightseeing Sun (services only). Tube: St. Paul's, Mansion House, Cannon St., and Blackfriars.

Tate Britain ★★★ Fronting the Thames near Vauxhall Bridge in Pimlico, the Tate looks like a smaller and more graceful relation of the British Museum. The most prestigious gallery in Britain, it houses the national collections, covering British art from the 16th century to the present day, as well as an array of international works. The Tate's collection of 20th- and 21st-century art is housed as **Tate Modern** (see below), but the collection at Tate Britain is still much too large to be displayed all at once, so the works on view change from time to time.

The older works include some of the best of Gainsborough, Reynolds, Stubbs, Blake, and Constable. William Hogarth is well represented, particularly by his satirical *O the Roast Beef of Old England* (also known as *The Gate of Calais*). You'll find the illustrations of William Blake, the incomparable mystical poet, including such works as *The Book of Job, The Divine Comedy,* and *Paradise Lost.* The collection of works by J. M. W. Turner is the Tate's largest by a single artist—Turner himself willed most of his paintings and watercolors to the nation.

Also on display are pieces by many major 19th- and 20th-century painters, including Paul Nash, Matisse, Dalí, Modigliani, Munch, Bonnard, and Picasso. Truly remarkable are the several enormous abstract canvases by Mark Rothko, the group of paintings and sculptures by Giacometti, and the paintings by one of England's best-known modern artists, Francis Bacon.

Insider's Tip: After you've seen the grand art, don't hasten away. Drop in to the Tate Gallery Shop for some of the best art books and postcards in London. The gallery sells whimsical T-shirts with art masterpieces on them. Those ubiquitous Tate Gallery canvas bags seen all over London are sold here, as are the town's best art posters. Invite your friends for tea at the Coffee Shop, with its excellent cakes and pastries, or lunch at the Rex Whistler restaurant (p. 90). You'll get to enjoy good food, Rex Whistler art, and the best and most reasonably priced wine list in London.

Millbank, SW1. ✆ **020/7887-8008.** www.tate.org.uk. Free admission; special exhibitions sometimes incur a charge of £7–£11 ($14–$22). Daily 10:30am–5:50pm. Tube: Pimlico.

Tate Modern ★★★ In the transformed Bankside Power Station in Southwark, this museum draws some two million visitors a year to see the greatest collection of international 20th-century art in Britain. How would we rate the collection? At the same level of the Pompidou in Paris, with a slight edge over New York's Guggenheim. Tate Modern is viewer-friendly, with eye-level hangings. All the big painting stars are here—a whole galaxy ranging from Dalí to Duchamp, from Giacometti to Matisse and Mondrian, from Picasso and Pollock to Rothko and Warhol. The Modern is also a gallery of 21st-century art, displaying new and exciting works.

The Tate Modern makes extensive use of glass for both its exterior and interior, offering panoramic views. Galleries are arranged over three levels and provide a variety of spaces for display. Instead of exhibiting art chronologically and by school, the Tate Modern, in a radical break from tradition, takes a thematic approach. This allows displays to cut across movements.

You can cross the Millennium Bridge, a pedestrian-only walk from the steps of St. Paul's, over the Thames to the gallery. Or else you can take the **Tate to Tate** boat (✆ **020/7887-8888**), which takes art lovers on an 18-minute journey across the Thames from the Tate Britain to the Tate Modern, with a stop at the London Eye. A day pass for the ferry costs £4.30 ($8.60), £11 ($22) for a family pass. Leaving from Millbank Pier, this catamaran is decorated by the trademark colorful dots of that *enfant terrible* artist, Damien Hirst.

Bankside, SE1. ✆ **020/7887-8888.** www.tate.org.uk. Free admission. Sun–Thurs 10am–6pm; Fri–Sat 10am–10pm. Tube: Southwark or Blackfriars.

Tower Bridge ★★ This is one of the world's most celebrated landmarks, and possibly the most photographed and painted bridge on earth. (Presumably, this is the one the Arizona businessman thought he was getting when he bought the London Bridge.) Despite its medieval appearance, Tower Bridge was built in 1894.

An exhibition inside the bridge commemorates its century-old history; it takes you up the north tower to high-level walkways between the two towers with spectacular views of St. Paul's, the Tower of London, and the Houses of Parliament. You're then led down the south tower and into the bridge's original engine room, containing the Victorian boilers and steam engines that used to raise

and lower the bridge for ships to pass. Multimedia exhibits in the towers illustrate the history of the bridge.

At Tower Bridge, SE1. ✆ **020/7403-3761.** www.towerbridge.org.uk. Tower Bridge Experience £6 ($12) adults, £4.50 ($9) students and seniors, £3 ($6) children 5–15, £14 ($28) family ticket, free for children 4 and under. Tower Bridge Experience Apr–Sept daily 10am–6:30pm; Oct–Mar daily 9:30am–6pm. Closed Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Tube: Tower Hill, London Bridge, or Fenchurch St.

Tower of London ★★★ *Kids* This ancient fortress continues to pack in the crowds with its macabre associations with the legendary figures imprisoned and/or executed here. There are more spooks here per square foot than in any other building in the whole of haunted Britain. Headless bodies, bodiless heads, phantom soldiers, icy blasts, clanking chains—you name them, the Tower's got them. Centuries after the last head rolled on Tower Hill, a shivery atmosphere of impending doom still lingers over the Tower's mighty walls. Plan on spending a lot of time here.

The Tower is actually a compound of structures built through the ages for varying purposes, mostly as expressions of royal power. The oldest is the **White Tower,** begun by William the Conqueror in 1078 to keep London's native Saxon population in check. Later rulers added other towers, walls, and fortified gates, until the buildings became like a small town within a city. Until the reign of James I (beginning in 1603), the Tower was also a royal residence. But above all, it was a prison for important captives.

Every stone of the Tower tells a story—usually a gory one. In the **Bloody Tower,** according to Shakespeare, Richard III's henchmen murdered the two little princes (the young sons of his brother, Edward IV). Richard knew his position as king could not be secure as long as his nephews were alive, and there seems no reasonable doubt that the princes were killed on his orders. Attempts have been made by some historians to clear his name, but Richard remains the chief suspect, and his deed caused him to lose the "hearts of the people," according to the *Chronicles of London* at the time.

Sir Walter Raleigh spent 13 years in the Bloody Tower before his date with the executioner. On the walls of the **Beauchamp Tower,** you can still read the last messages scratched by despairing prisoners. Through **Traitors' Gate** passed such ill-fated, romantic figures as Robert Devereux, the second Earl of Essex and a favorite of Elizabeth I. A plaque marks the eerie place at **Tower Green** where two wives of Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard, plus Sir Thomas More, and the 9-day queen, Lady Jane Grey, all lost their lives.

The Tower, besides being a royal palace, a fortress, and a prison, was also an armory, a treasury, a menagerie, and, in 1675, an astronomical observatory. Reopened in 1999, the White Tower holds the **Armouries,** which date from the reign of Henry VIII, as well as a display of instruments of torture and execution that recall some of the most ghastly moments in the Tower's history. In the Jewel House, you'll find the Tower's greatest attraction, the **Crown Jewels**—some of the world's most precious stones set into robes, swords, scepters, and crowns. The Imperial State Crown is the most famous crown on earth; made for Victoria in 1837, it's worn today by Queen Elizabeth II when she opens Parliament. Studded with some 3,000 jewels, it includes the Black Prince's Ruby, worn by Henry V at Agincourt. The 530-carat Star of Africa, a cut diamond on the Royal Sceptre with Cross, would make Harry Winston turn over in his grave. You'll have to stand in long lines to catch just a glimpse of the jewels as you and hundreds of others scroll by on moving sidewalks, but the wait is worth it.

The presumed prison cell of Sir Thomas More is open to the public. More left this cell in 1535 to face his executioner after he'd fallen out with King Henry VIII over the monarch's desire to divorce Catherine of Aragon, the first of his six wives. More is believed to have lived in the lower part of the Bell Tower, here in this whitewashed cell, during the last 14 months of his life, although some historians doubt this claim.

A **palace** inhabited by King Edward I in the late 1200s stands above Traitors' Gate. It's the only surviving medieval palace in Britain. Guides at the palace are dressed in period costumes, and reproductions of furniture and fittings, including Edward's throne, evoke the era, along with burning incense and candles.

In 2004 several improvements were made, including the opening of a Visitors Center and the restoration of a 13th-century wharf. To the west of the Tower is the newly created Tower Hill Square, designed by Stanton Williams, with a series of pavilions housing ticketing facilities, a gift shop, and a cafeteria.

Oh, yes—don't forget to look for the ravens. Six of them (plus two spares) are all registered as official Tower residents. According to a legend, the Tower of London will stand as long as those black, ominous birds remain, so to be on the safe side, one of the wings of each raven is clipped.

One-hour guided tours of the entire compound are given by the Yeoman Warders (also known as "Beefeaters") every half-hour, starting at 9:30am, from the Middle Tower near the main entrance. The

Tips Tower Tips

You can spend the shortest time possible in the Tower's long lines if you buy your ticket at the kiosk at Tower Hill Tube station before emerging aboveground. Even so, choose a day other than Sunday—crowds are at their worst then—and arrive as early as you can in the morning.

last guided walk starts about 3:30pm in summer, 2:30pm in winter—weather permitting, of course.

You can attend the nightly **Ceremony of the Keys,** the ceremonial locking-up of the Tower by the Yeoman Warders. For free tickets, write to the Ceremony of the Keys, Waterloo Block, Tower of London, London EC3N 4AB, and request a specific date, but also list alternate dates. At least 6 weeks' notice is required. Accompany all requests with a stamped, self-addressed envelope (British stamps only) or two International Reply Coupons. With ticket in hand, you will be admitted by a Yeoman Warder at 9:35pm. Frankly, we think it's not worth the trouble you must go through to see this rather cheesy ceremony, but we know some who disagree with us.

Tower Hill, EC3. ✆ **0870/751-5175.** www.tower-of-london.org.uk. Admission £16 ($32) adults, £13 ($26) students and seniors, £9.50 ($19) children, £45 ($90) family ticket for 5 (but no more than 2 adults), free for children 4 and under. Mar–Oct Tues–Sat 9am–6pm, Sun–Mon 10am–6pm; Nov–Feb Tues–Sat 9am–5pm, Sun–Mon 10am–5pm. Tube: Tower Hill.

Victoria and Albert Museum ★★★ The Victoria and Albert is the greatest decorative-arts museum in the world. It's also one of the liveliest and most imaginative museums in London.

The medieval holdings include such treasures as the early-English Gloucester Candlestick; the Byzantine Veroli Casket, with its ivory panels based on Greek plays; and the Syon Cope, a unique embroidery made in England in the early 14th century. An area devoted to Islamic art houses the Ardabil Carpet from 16th-century Persia.

The V&A boasts the largest collection of Renaissance sculpture outside Italy. A highlight of the 16th-century collection is the marble group *Neptune with Triton,* by Bernini. The cartoons by Raphael, which were conceived as designs for tapestries for the Sistine Chapel, are owned by the Queen and are on display here. A most unusual, huge, and impressive exhibit is the Cast Courts, life-size plaster models of ancient and medieval statuary and architecture.

The museum has the greatest collection of Indian art outside India, plus Chinese and Japanese galleries. In complete contrast are suites of English furniture, metalwork, and ceramics, and a superb collection of portrait miniatures, including the one Hans Holbein the Younger made of Anne of Cleves for the benefit of Henry VIII, who was again casting around for a suitable wife. The Dress Collection includes corsets that are sure to make you wince. There's also a remarkable collection of musical instruments.

The V&A has opened 15 modern galleries—the **British Galleries** ★★★—telling the story of British design from 1500 to 1900. No other museum in the world houses such a diverse collection of British design and decorative art. From Chippendale to Morris, all of the top British designers are featured in some 3,000 items, ranging from the 5m-high (16-ft.) Melville Bed (1697) with its luxurious wild-silk damask and red-velvet hangings, to 19th-century classics such as furniture by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. One of the most prized possessions is the "Great Bed of Ware," mentioned in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night.* Also on exhibit is the wedding suite of James II. The interactive displays hold special interest. Learning about heraldry is far more interesting when you're designing your own coat of arms. And don't miss the V&A's most bizarre gallery, Fakes and Forgeries. The impostors here are amazingly authentic—in fact, we'd judge some of them as better than the old masters themselves.

Don't miss the suite of five renovated painting galleries that were originally built in 1850. A trio of these galleries focuses on British landscapes as seen through the eyes of Turner, Constable, and others. Constable's oil sketches were donated by his daughter, Isabel, in 1888. Another gallery showcases the bequest of Constantine Ionides, a Victorian collector, with masters such as Botticelli, Delacroix, Degas, Tintoretto, and Ingres. There's even a piano here designed by the famous Edward Burne-Jones, which once belonged to Ionides's brother.

Cromwell Rd., SW7. ✆ **020/7942-2000.** www.vam.ac.uk. Free admission. Temporary exhibitions often £10 ($20). Daily 10am–5:45pm (Wed until 10pm); until 10pm the last Fri of each month. Tube: South Kensington.

Westminster Abbey ★★★ With its identical square towers and superb archways, this early-English Gothic abbey is one of the greatest examples of ecclesiastical architecture on earth. But it's far more than that: It's the shrine of a nation, the symbol of everything Britain has stood for and stands for, and the place in which most of its rulers were crowned and where many lie buried.

Nearly every figure in English history has left his or her mark on Westminster Abbey. Edward the Confessor founded the Benedictine abbey in 1065 on this spot overlooking Parliament Square. The first English king crowned in the Abbey may have been Harold, in January 1066. The man who defeated him at the Battle of Hastings later that year, William the Conqueror, had the first recorded coronation in the Abbey on Christmas Day that same year. The coronation tradition has continued to the present day. The essentially early-English Gothic structure existing today owes more to Henry III's plans than to those of any other sovereign, although many architects, including Wren, have contributed to the Abbey.

Built on the site of the ancient Lady Chapel in the early 16th century, the **Henry VII Chapel** is one of the loveliest in Europe, with its fan vaulting, Knights of Bath banners, and Torrigiani-designed tomb for the king himself, near which hangs a 15th-century Vivarini painting, *Madonna and Child.* Also here, ironically buried in the same tomb, are Catholic Mary I and Protestant Elizabeth I (whose archrival, Mary Queen of Scots, is entombed on the other side of the Henry VII Chapel). In one end of the chapel, you can stand on Cromwell's memorial stone and view the **Royal Air Force Chapel** and its Battle of Britain memorial window, unveiled in 1947 to honor the Royal Air Force.

You can also visit the most hallowed spot in the abbey, the **shrine of Edward the Confessor** (canonized in the 12th c.). Near the tomb of Henry V is the Coronation Chair, made at the command of Edward I in 1300 to display the mystical Stone of Scone (which some think is the sacred stone mentioned in Genesis and known as Jacob's Pillar). Scottish kings were once crowned on the stone. (It has since been returned to Scotland.)

When you see a statue of the Bard, with one arm resting on a stack of books, you've arrived at **Poets' Corner.** Shakespeare himself is buried at Stratford-upon-Avon, but resting here are Chaucer, Samuel Johnson, Tennyson, Browning, and Dickens. There's even an American, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, as well as monuments to just about everybody: Milton, Keats, Shelley, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, George Eliot, and others. The most stylized monument is Sir Jacob Epstein's sculptured bust of William Blake. More-recent tablets commemorate poet Dylan Thomas and Sir Laurence Olivier.

Statesmen and men of science—Disraeli, Newton, Charles Darwin—are also interred in the abbey or honored by monuments. Near the west door is the 1965 memorial to Sir Winston Churchill. In the

vicinity of this memorial is the tomb of the **Unknown Warrior,** commemorating the British dead of World War I.

Although most of the Abbey's statuary commemorates notable figures of the past, 10 new statues were unveiled in July 1998. Placed in the Gothic niches above the West Front door, these statues honor 10 modern-day martyrs drawn from every continent and religious denomination. The sculptures include Elizabeth of Russia, Janani Luwum, and Martin Luther King, Jr., representatives of those who have sacrificed their lives for their beliefs.

Off the Cloisters, the **College Garden** is the oldest garden in England, under cultivation for more than 900 years. Established in the 11th century as the abbey's first infirmary garden, this was once a magnificent source of fruits, vegetables, and medicinal herbs. Five of the trees in the garden were planted in 1850 and they continue to thrive today. Surrounded by high walls, flowering trees dot the lawns, and park benches provide comfort where you can hardly hear the roar of passing traffic. The garden is open only Tuesday through Thursday April through September from 10am to 6pm, and October through March from 10am to 4pm.

Insider's Tip: Far removed from the pomp and glory is the **Abbey Treasure Museum,** which displays a real bag of oddities in the undercroft—or crypt—part of the monastic buildings erected between 1066 and 1100. You'll find royal effigies that were used instead of the real corpses for lying-in-state ceremonies because they smelled better. You'll see the almost lifelike effigy of Admiral Nelson (his mistress arranged his hair) and even that of Edward III, his lip warped by the cerebral hemorrhage that felled him. Other oddities include Henry V's funeral armor, a unique corset from Elizabeth I's effigy, and the Essex Ring that Elizabeth I gave to her favorite (Robert Devereux, the Earl of Essex) when she was feeling good about him.

On Sundays, the Abbey is not open to visitors; the rest of the church is open unless a service is being conducted. For times of services, phone the **Chapter Office** (✆ **020/7222-5152**).

Broad Sanctuary, SW1. ✆ **020/7222-5152.** www.westminster-abbey.org. Admission £10 ($20) adults; £7 ($14) students, seniors, and children 11–18; £24 ($48) family ticket; free for children 10 and under. Mon–Tues and Thurs–Fri 9:30am–3:45pm; Wed 9:30am–6pm; Sat 9:30am–2:45pm. Tube: Westminster or St. James's Park.

2 More Central London Attractions

CHURCHES & CATHEDRALS

Many of London's churches offer free lunchtime concerts; a full list is available from the London Tourist Board. It's customary to leave a small donation.

St. Etheldreda's The oldest Roman Catholic church in London, St. Etheldreda's stands on Ely Place, off Charterhouse Street, at Holborn Circus. Built in 1251, it was mentioned by the Bard in both *Richard II* and *Richard III.* A survivor of the Great Fire of 1666, the church and the area surrounding it were the property of the diocese of the city of Ely, in the days when many bishops had Episcopal houses in London, as well as in the cathedral cities in which they held their sees. The property still has a private road, with impressive iron gates and a lodge for the gatekeeper.

St. Etheldreda, whose name is sometimes shortened to St. Audrey, was a 7th-century king's daughter who left her husband and established an abbey on the Isle of Ely. St. Etheldreda's has a distinguished musical tradition, with the 11am Mass on Sunday sung in Latin. Other Masses are on Sunday at 9am, Monday through Friday at 8am and 1pm, and Saturday at 9:30am. Lunch, with a varied choice of hot and cold dishes, is served Monday through Friday from noon to 2:30pm in the Crypt Café.

14 Ely Place, Holborn Circus, EC1. ✆ **020/7405-1061.** www.stetheldreda.com. Free admission. Daily 7:30am–6pm; Sat Mass 9:30am; Sun Masses 9 and 11am; weekday Masses Mon–Fri 8am and 1pm. Tube: Farringdon or Chancery Lane.

St. Martin–in-the-Fields ★ Designed by James Gibbs, a disciple of Christopher Wren, and completed in 1726, this classical church stands at the northeast corner of Trafalgar Square, opposite the National Gallery. Its spire, added in 1824, towers 56m (184 ft.) higher than Nelson's Column, which also rises on the square. The steeple became the model for many churches in colonial America. Since the first year of World War I (1914), the homeless have sought "soup and shelter" at St. Martin, a tradition that continues.

At one time, the crypt held the remains of Charles II (he's in Westminster Abbey now), who was christened here, giving St. Martin a claim as a royal parish church. His mistress, Nell Gwynne, and the highwayman Jack Sheppard are both interred here. The floors of the crypt are actually gravestones, and the walls date from the 1500s. The little restaurant, **Café in the Crypt,** is still called "Field's" by its devotees. Also in the crypt is the **London Brass Rubbing Centre**

(✆ **020/7930-9306;** www2.stmartin-in-the-fields.org/page/visiting/brass.html), with 88 exact copies of bronze portraits ready for use. Paper, rubbing materials, and instructions on how to begin are furnished, and there's classical music for you to enjoy as you proceed. Fees to make the rubbings start at £4.50 ($9). There's also a gift shop with brass-rubbing kits for children, ready-made rubbings, Celtic jewelry, miniature brasses, and model knights. The center is open Monday to Wednesday 10am to 7pm, Thursday to Saturday 10am to 10pm, and Sunday noon to 7pm.

Insider's Tip: In the back of the church is a crafts market. Also, lunchtime and evening concerts are staged Monday, Tuesday, and Friday at 1:05pm, Tuesday, and Thursday to Saturday at 7:30pm. Lunch concerts are free, but evening tickets cost £6 to £24 ($12–$48).

Trafalgar Sq., WC2. ✆ **020/7766-1100.** www.stmartin-in-the-fields.org. Mon–Fri 9am–6pm; Sat–Sun 8:45am–7:30pm as long as no service is taking place. Concerts Mon, Tues, and Fri 1:05pm; Tues and Thurs–Sat 7:30pm. Tube: Charing Cross.

Temple Church ★★ One of three Norman "round churches" left in England, this one was first completed in the 12th century. Not surprisingly, it has been restored. Look for the knightly effigies and the Norman door, and take note of the circle of grotesque portrait heads, including a goat in a mortarboard. Free organ recitals are presented Wednesday 1:15 to 1:35pm. On Inner Temple Lane, about where the Strand becomes Fleet Street going east, you'll see the memorial pillar called **Temple Bar,** which marks the boundary of The City of London.

The Temple (within the Inner Temple), King's Bench Walk, EC4. ✆ **020/7353-3470.** www.templechurch.com. Free admission. Mon–Tues and Fri 11am–12:30am and 1–4pm; Wed 2–4pm; Thurs 11am–12:30pm and 2–3:30pm; Sat 11am–12:30pm and 1–3pm; Sun 1–3:30pm. Tube: Temple.

Wesley's Chapel, House & Museum of Methodism John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, established this church in 1778 as his London base. Wesley, who rode on horseback throughout the English countryside and preached in the open air, lived at no. 47, next door to the chapel. He's buried in a grave behind the chapel. The house contains many of Wesley's belongings and his study chair. While it survived the Blitz, the church later fell into disrepair; major restoration was completed in the 1970s. In the crypt, a museum traces the history of Methodism to present times.

Across the road in Bunhill Fields is the **Dissenters Graveyard,** where Daniel Defoe, William Blake, and John Bunyan are buried.

49 City Rd., EC1. ✆ **020/7253-2262.** www.wesleyschapel.org.uk. Chapel free admission. House and museum are also free, but donation of £2 ($4) per person is expected. House and museum Mon–Sat 10am–4pm; Sun noon–1:45pm. Tube: Old St. or Moorgate.

Westminster Cathedral ★ This spectacular brick-and-stone church (1903) is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church in Britain. Adorned in early-Byzantine style, it's massive: 108m (354 ft.) long and 47m (154 ft.) wide. One hundred different marbles compose the richly decorated interior, and eight marble columns support the nave. Eight yellow-marble columns hold up the huge canopy over the high altar. Mosaics emblazon the chapels and the vaulting of the sanctuary. If you take the elevator to the top of the 82m (269-ft.) campanile, you'll be rewarded with sweeping views that take in Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, and St. Paul's Cathedral. There is a cafe serving light snacks and soft drinks from 9am to 5pm and a gift shop open Monday to Saturday from 9:30am to 5:15pm, Sunday from 10am to 4:45pm.

Ashley Place, SW1. ✆ **020/7798-9055.** www.westminstercathedral.org.uk. Cathedral free admission. Audio tours £2.50 ($5). Tower £3 ($6). Cathedral services Mon–Sat 7am–7pm; Sun 8am–8pm. Tower daily 9:30am–12:30pm and 1–5pm. Tube: Victoria.

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

Banqueting House ★★ The feasting chamber in Whitehall Palace is probably the most sumptuous dining hall on earth. (Unfortunately, you can't dine here unless you're a visiting head of state.) Designed by Inigo Jones and decorated with original ceiling paintings by Rubens, the hall is dazzling enough to make you forget food altogether. Among the historic events that took place here were the beheading of King Charles I, who stepped to his execution through a window onto the scaffold outside, and the restoration ceremony of Charles II, marking the return of monarchy after Cromwell's brief Puritan Commonwealth. The house often closes on short notice for official events, so it's best to call in advance if you want to see it.

Whitehall Palace, Horse Guards Ave., SW1. ✆ **0870/751-5178.** www.hrp.org.uk. Admission £4.50 ($9) adults, £3.50 ($7) seniors and students, £2.25 ($4.50) children 15 and under. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm (last admission 4:30pm). Tube: Westminster or Embankment.

Benjamin Franklin House ★ The only surviving home of Benjamin Franklin in London opened as a museum in 2006. Off Trafalgar Square, the modest four-story brick building was Franklin's residence from 1757 to 1775, when he was a diplomat on behalf of American colonists. Curators call the house "the first de facto U.S.

Embassy." The building was also the site of many of Franklin's scientific experiments. It was here that he invented bifocal glasses and created the ethereal-sounding musical instrument, the glass harmonica. Franklin lived here in "serene comfort and affection," often having a full household of friends or relatives. Visitors can view the parlor where Franklin—a great fan of fresh air—sat "air bathing" naked by the open windows. The museum stages a "Historical Experience" every 45 minutes throughout the day. Visitors are taken through the various rooms by actors presenting a re-creation of Franklin's last night in London.

36 Craven St., WC2. ✆ **020/7930-6601.** www.benjaminfranklinhouse.org. Admission £9 ($18) adults; £6 ($12) children, seniors, and students. Wed–Sun 10am–5pm; also Mon June–Sept 10am–5pm. Tube: Trafalgar Sq.

Cabinet War Rooms ★ Visitors today can see the **Cabinet War Rooms,** the bombproof bunker suite of rooms, just as they were when abandoned by Winston Churchill and the British government at the end of World War II. You can see the Map Room with its huge wall maps; the Atlantic map is a mass of pinholes. (Each hole represents at least 1 convoy.) Next door is Churchill's bedroom-cum-office, which has a bed and a desk with two BBC microphones on it—he used these to broadcast the now-famous speeches that stirred the nation. Other rooms on the tour include the Chiefs of Staff map room, Churchill's kitchen and dining room, Sir Winston's private detectives' room, and Mrs. Churchill's bedroom. There's everything here from a pencil cartoon of Hitler to a mousetrap in the kitchen, to the original chamber pots under the beds (they had no flush toilets). The **Transatlantic Telephone Room** is little more than a broom closet, but it housed the Bell Telephone Company's special scrambler phone, called *Sigsaly,* and it was where Churchill conferred with Roosevelt. Visitors are provided with a step-by-step personal sound guide, providing a detailed account of each room's function and history.

Also in the war rooms is the **Churchill Museum,** the world's first major museum dedicated to the life of Sir Winston Churchill. It explores in various exhibits and photographs the saga of Britain's wartime prime minister. The opening marked the 40th anniversary of the prime minister's death. The museum, through its memorabilia, introduces visitors to the private man but also traces his development as a world leader.

Clive Steps, at end of King Charles St. (off Whitehall near Big Ben), SW1. ✆ **020/7930-6961.** www.iwm.org.uk/cabinet. Admission £11 ($22) adults, £9 ($18) seniors and students, free for children 15 and under. Daily 9:30am–6pm (last admission at 5pm). Tube: Westminster or St. James's.

City Hall On the South Bank of the Thames, adjacent to Tower Bridge, the mayor of London and the London Assembly got a new home in 2002. A gleaming, 10-story egg-shaped steel-and-glass structure, it was dedicated by Her Majesty. The new home for city government has become London's latest—some say, most controversial—landmark. Half of City Hall is open to the public, and the views from its rooftop gallery are worth the trek over to the South Bank. An exhibition space highlights changing cultural exhibits, and there is also a cafe on-site.

The Queen's Walk, SE1. ✆ **020/7983-4100.** www.london.gov.uk. Free admission. Visitor information desk Mon–Fri 9am–5pm; cafe Mon–Fri 8am–8pm. Tube: London Bridge.

Horse Guards ★ North of Downing Street, on the west side of Whitehall, is the Horse Guards building, which is the headquarters of the British Army. The real draw here is the Horse Guards themselves: the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, a combination of the oldest and most senior regiments in the British Army—the Life Guards and the Blues and Royals. In theory, their duty is to protect the sovereign. Life Guards wear red tunics and white plumes, and Blues and Royals are attired in blue tunics with red plumes. Two mounted members of the Household Cavalry keep watch daily from 10am to 4pm. The mounted sentries change duty every hour as a benefit to the horses. Foot sentries change every 2 hours. The chief guard rather grandly inspects the troops here daily at 4pm. The guard, with flair and fanfare, dismounts at 5pm.

We prefer the once-daily **changing of the guards** here to the more famous ceremony at Buckingham Palace. Beginning around 11am Monday through Saturday and 10am on Sunday, a new guard leaves the Hyde Park Barracks on horseback, rides down Pall Mall, and arrives at the Horse Guards building, all in about 30 minutes. The old guard then returns to the barracks.

If you pass through the arch at Horse Guards, you'll find yourself at the **Horse Guards Parade,** which opens onto St. James's Park. This spacious court provides the best view of the various architectural styles that make up Whitehall. Regrettably, the parade ground itself is now a parking lot.

The military pageant—the most famous in Britain—known as **Trooping the Colour,** celebrating the Queen's birthday, takes place in June at the Horse Guards Parade (see "London Calendar of Events," in chapter 1). The "Colour" refers to the flag of the regiment. For devotees of pomp and circumstance, "Beating the Retreat"

is staged here 2 successive evenings in June. It's only a dress rehearsal, though, for Trooping the Colour.

Whitehall, SW1. ✆ **020/7414-2479.** www.army.mod.uk. Free admission. Tube: Charing Cross, Westminster, or Embankment.

Lincoln's Inn ★★ Lincoln's Inn is the oldest of the four Inns of Court. Between the City and The West End, Lincoln's Inn comprises 4.4 hectares (11 acres), including lawns, squares, gardens, a 17th-century chapel (open Mon–Fri noon–2pm), a library, and two halls. One of these, Old Hall, dates from 1490 and has remained almost unaltered, with its linenfold paneling, stained glass, and wooden screen by Inigo Jones. It was once the home of Sir Thomas More, and it was where barristers met, ate, and debated 150 years before the *Mayflower* sailed on its epic voyage. Old Hall is the scene for the opening chapter of Charles Dickens's *Bleak House.* The other hall, Great Hall, remains one of the finest Tudor Revival buildings in London and was opened by Queen Victoria in 1843.

Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2. ✆ **020/7405-1393.** www.lincolnsinn.org.uk. Free admission to grounds. Mon–Fri 10am–4pm. Tube: Holborn or Chancery Lane.

St. Pancras Station The London terminus for the Eurostar trains, St. Pancras Station (built from 1863–67) is a masterpiece of Victorian engineering. Designed by W. H. Barlow, the 207m-long (679-ft.) glass-and-iron train station spans 72m (236 ft.) in width and rises to a peak of 30m (98 ft.) above the rails. The platforms were raised 6m (20 ft.) above the ground because the tracks ran over the Regent's Canal before entering the station. The *pièce de résistance,* though, is Sir George Gilbert Scott's fanciful St. Pancras Chambers. Done in high Gothic style, it's graced with pinnacles, towers, and gables; it now functions as office space. The facade runs 170m (558 ft.) and is flanked by a clock tower and a west tower.

Euston Rd., NW1. Tube: King's Cross/St. Pancras.

Spencer House ★★ This is one of the city's most beautiful buildings. It was constructed in 1766 for the first Earl Spencer, who intended it as a shrine to Georgiana Poyntz, his childhood sweetheart whom he had secretly married the year before. It hasn't been a private residence since 1927, and it had something of a checkered history until it was restored and opened as a museum in 1990. Rooms are filled with period furniture and art, some even loaned by the Queen herself. The most spectacular salon is the Palm Room, all in white, gold, and green.

27 St. James's Place, SW1. ✆ **020/7499-8620.** www.spencerhouse.co.uk. Admission £9 ($18) adults; £7 ($14) students, seniors, and children 10–16; children 9 and under not allowed. Garden admission £3.50 ($7). Sun only 10:30am–5:45pm (last admission 4:45pm). Closed Jan and Aug. Tube: Green Park.

LITERARY & MUSICAL LANDMARKS

Besides the homes of the authors and composers listed below, you can visit the abodes of other celebrated Londoners (detailed in other sections of this chapter), including Apsley House, the former mansion of the Duke of Wellington (p. 130). Finally, the fascinating home of legendary architect Sir John Soane (p. 141) is open to the public and houses a museum about Soane.

Carlyle's House From 1834 to 1881, Thomas Carlyle, author of *The French Revolution,* and Jane Baillie Welsh Carlyle, his noted letter-writing wife, resided in this modest 1708 terraced house. Furnished essentially as it was in Carlyle's day, the house is located about half a block from the Thames, near the Chelsea Embankment, along King's Road. It was described by his wife as being "of most antique physiognomy, quite to our humour; all wainscoted, carved, and queer-looking, roomy, substantial, commodious, with closets to satisfy any Bluebeard." The most interesting chamber is the not-so-soundproof "soundproof" study in the skylit attic. Filled with Carlyle memorabilia—his books, a letter from Disraeli, personal effects, a writing chair, even his death mask—this is where the author did his work.

24 Cheyne Row, SW3. ✆ **020/7352-7087.** Admission £4.50 ($9) adults, £2.30 ($4.60) children 5–16, free for children 4 and under. Mar 14–Oct Wed–Fri 2–5pm; Sat–Sun and bank holidays 11am–5pm. Closed Nov–Mar 13. Tube: Sloane Sq. or South Kensington.

Dickens House Here in Bloomsbury stands the simple abode in which Charles Dickens wrote *Oliver Twist* and finished *The Pickwick Papers* (his American readers actually waited at the dock for the ship that brought in each new installment). The place is almost a shrine: Its reconstructed interiors contain his study, manuscripts, and personal relics. During Christmas week (including Christmas Day), the museum is decorated in the style of Dickens's first Christmas there. During Christmas, the raised admission prices of £10 ($20) for adults and £5 ($10) for children include hot mince pies and a few glasses of "Smoking Bishop," Dickens's favorite hot punch, as well as a copy of the museum's guidebooks.

48 Doughty St., WC1. ✆ **020/7405-2127.** www.dickensmuseum.com. Admission £5 ($10) adults, £4 ($8) students and seniors, £3 ($6) children, £14 ($28) family ticket. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Tube: Russell Sq., Chancery Lane, or Holborn.

A Neighborhood of One's Own: The Homes of Virginia Woolf

Born in London in 1882, author and essayist Virginia Woolf used the city as the setting for many of her novels, including *Jacob's Room* (1922). The daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen and his wife, Julia Duckworth, Virginia spent her formative years at **22 Hyde Park Gate,** off Kensington Road, west of Royal Albert Hall. Her mother died in 1895 and her father in 1904.

After the death of their father, Virginia and her sister Vanessa left Kensington for Bloomsbury, settling near the British Museum. It was an interesting move, as Bloomsbury was a neighborhood that upper-class Victorians didn't view as "respectable." But Virginia was to make it her own, and in the process, make the district world-famous as the hub of literary London. From 1905, the Stephens lived at **46 Gordon Sq.,** east of Gower Street and University College. It was here that the celebrated literary and artistic circle known as the "Bloomsbury Group" came into being. In time, the group would embrace art critic Clive Bell and author Leonard Woolf, future husbands of Vanessa and Virginia, respectively. Later, Virginia went to live at **29 Fitzroy Sq.,** west of Tottenham Court Road, in a house once occupied by George Bernard Shaw.

During the next 2 decades, Virginia resided at several more Bloomsbury addresses, including **Brunswick Square, Tavistock Square,** and **Mecklenburg Square.** These homes have disappeared or been altered beyond recognition. During this time, the Bloomsbury Group reached out to include the artists Roger Fry and Duncan Grant, and Virginia became a friend of economist John Maynard Keynes and author E. M. Forster *(A Passage to India).* At Tavistock Square (1924–39) and at Mecklenburg Square (1939–40), she operated the Hogarth Press with Leonard. She published her own early work here, as well as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land.*

Samuel Johnson's House ★★ Dr. Johnson and his copyists compiled his famous dictionary in this Queen Anne house, where the lexicographer, poet, essayist, and fiction writer lived from 1748

to 1759. Although Johnson also lived at Staple Inn in Holborn and at a number of other places, the Gough Square house is the only one of his residences remaining in modern London. The 17th-century building has been painstakingly restored, and it's well worth a visit.

After you're done touring the house, you might want to stop in at **Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese,** Wine Office Court, 145 Fleet St. (✆ **020/7353-6170**), Johnson's favorite locale. He must have had some lean nights at the pub because by the time he had compiled his dictionary, he'd already spent his advance of 1,500 guineas. G. K. Chesterton, author of *What's Wrong with the World* (1910) and *The Superstition of Divorce* (1920), was also a patron of the pub.

17 Gough Sq., EC4. ✆ **020/7353-3745.** www.drjohnsonshouse.org. Admission £4.50 ($9) adults, £3.50 ($7) students and seniors, £1.50 ($3) children, £10 ($20) family ticket, free for children 10 and under. Oct–Apr Mon–Sat 11am–5pm; May–Sept Mon–Sat 11am–5:30pm. Tube: Blackfriars, Chancery Lane, Temple, or Holborn. Walk up New Bridge St. and turn left onto Fleet St.; Gough Sq. is tiny and hidden, north of Fleet St.

MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

Apsley House, The Wellington Museum ★ This was the mansion of the Duke of Wellington, the "Iron Duke," one of Britain's greatest generals, who defeated Napoleon at Waterloo. Later, for a short period while he was prime minister, the duke had to have iron shutters fitted to his windows to protect him from a mob outraged by his autocratic opposition to reform. (His unpopularity soon passed, however.)

The house is crammed with art treasures, including three original Velázquez paintings, and mementos that include the duke's medals and battlefield orders. Apsley House also holds some of the finest silver and porcelain pieces in Europe, displayed in the Plate and China Room. European monarchs grateful to Wellington for saving their thrones showered him with treasures. The collection includes a Sèvres Egyptian service originally intended as a divorce present from Napoleon to Josephine (she refused it); Louis XVIII eventually presented it to Wellington. Another treasure, the Portuguese Silver Service, has been hailed as the single greatest artifact of Portuguese neoclassical silver.

149 Piccadilly, Hyde Park Corner, W1. ✆ **020/7499-5676.** Admission £5.30 ($11) adults, £4 ($8) seniors, £2.60 ($5.20) children 15 and under. Apr–Oct Tues–Sun 10am–5pm; Nov–Mar Tues–Sun 10am–4pm. Tube: Hyde Park Corner.

British Library ★★ In 1996, one of the world's great libraries began moving its collection of some 12 million books, manuscripts, and other items from the British Museum to its very own home in

Value A Money-Saving Pass

The **London Pass** provides admission to more than 55 attractions in and around London, "timed" admission at some attractions (bypassing the queues), plus free travel on public transport (buses, Tubes, and trains) and a pocket guidebook. It costs £39 ($78) for 1 day, £73 ($146) for 3 days, and £112 ($224) for 6 days (children pay £22 ($44), £42 ($84), or £70 ($140), and includes admission to St. Paul's Cathedral, HMS *Belfast,* the Jewish Museum, and the Thames Barrier Visitor Centre—and many other attractions. This rather pricey pass is useful to persons who try to cram 2 days' worth of sightseeing into a single day. But if you're a slow-moving visitor, who likes to stop and smell the roses, you may not get your money's worth. Decide how much transportation and sightseeing you hope to get done, and, using this guide, calculate what the costs will be. It's a bit of paper work, but it will help you decide whether the London Pass is a good deal for you. You can also purchase the pass without the transportation package. Visit the website at **www.londonpass.com**.

St. Pancras. In the new building, you get modernistic beauty rather than the fading glamour and the ghosts of Karl Marx, William Thackeray, and Virginia Woolf of the old library at the British Museum. You are also likely to get the book you want within an hour instead of 3 days. Academics, students, writers, and bookworms from all over the world come here. On a recent visit, we sat next to a student researching the history of pubs.

The bright, roomy interior is far more inviting than the rather dull redbrick exterior suggests. The most spectacular room is the Humanities Reading Room, constructed on three levels with daylight filtered through the ceiling.

The fascinating collection includes such items of historic and literary interest as two of the four surviving copies of the *Magna Carta* (1215), a Gutenberg Bible, Nelson's last letter to Lady Hamilton, and the journals of Captain Cook. Almost every major author—Dickens, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Keats, and hundreds of others—is represented in the section devoted to English literature. Beneath Roubiliac's 1758 statue of Shakespeare stands a case of documents

relating to the Bard, including a mortgage bearing his signature and a copy of the First Folio of 1623. There's also an unrivaled collection of stamps and stamp-related items.

Using headphones set around the room, you can hear thrilling audio snippets such as James Joyce reading a passage from *Finnegan's Wake.* Particularly intriguing is an exhibition called "Turning the Pages," where you can, for example, electronically read a complete Leonardo da Vinci notebook by putting your hands on a special computer screen that flips from one page to another. There is a copy of *The Canterbury Tales* from 1410, and even manuscripts from *Beowulf* (ca. 1000). In the Historical Documents section are letters by everybody from Henry VIII to Napoleon, from Elizabeth I to Churchill. In the music displays, you can seek out original sheet music by Beethoven, Handel, Stravinsky, and Lennon and McCartney. An entire day spent here will only scratch the surface.

Though self-guided admission to the library is free, walking library tours cost £8 ($16) for adults and £6.50 ($13) for seniors, students, and children. They are conducted Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 3pm, and Saturday at 10:30am and 3pm. Library tours that include a visit to one of the reading rooms take place on Sundays and bank holidays at 11:30am and 3pm; £8 ($16) adults, £6.50 ($13) for seniors and students. Reservations can be made up to 2 weeks in advance.

96 Euston Rd., NW1. ✆ **020/7412-7332.** www.boxoffice.bl.uk. Free admission. Mon and Wed–Fri 9:30am–6pm; Tues 9:30am–8pm; Sat 9:30am–5pm; Sun 11am–5pm. Tube: King's Cross/St. Pancras, or Euston Sq.

Courtauld Gallery The nucleus of this collection was acquired by Samuel Courtauld, who upon his death in 1947, left it to the University of London. Today it houses the biggest collection of Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings in Britain, with masterpieces by Monet, Manet, Degas, Renoir, Cézanne, van Gogh, and Gauguin. The gallery also has a superb collection of old-master paintings and drawings, including works by Rubens and Michelangelo; early-Italian paintings, ivories, and majolica; the Lee collection of old masters; and early-20th-century English, French, and British paintings.

Second floor galleries display paintings and sculptures from the late 19th and 20th centuries, including an outstanding group of Fauve works and art by everybody from Matisse to Dufy. We come here at least once every season to revisit one work in particular: Manet's exquisite ***A Bar at the Folies-Bergère*** ★. Many of the paintings are displayed without glass, giving the gallery a more intimate feeling than most.

Somerset House, the Strand, WC2. ✆ **020/7848-2526.** www.courtauld.ac.uk. Admission £5 ($10) adults, £4 ($8) seniors and students, free for children 17 and under. Daily 10am–6pm (last admission 5:15pm). Tube: Temple, Covent Garden, Charing Cross, or Holborn.

Dulwich Picture Gallery ★ *Finds* Just 12 minutes by train from Victoria Station, this rarely visited museum houses one of the world's most significant collections of European old masters from the 17th and 18th centuries. In a purpose-built gallery designed by Sir John Soane in 1811, the collection is one of the oldest in Britain, having been assembled in the 1790s. Many of the paintings were collected by Stanislaus Augustus of Poland for shipment to his homeland. Before that happened, his kingdom was partitioned out of existence, and the paintings remained in London. You can view works by such old masters as Rembrandt, Rubens, Canaletto, Gainsborough, Watteau, Pousin, and others. The *Sunday Telegraph* has hailed Dulwich as "the most beautiful small art gallery in the world."

Gallery Road, Dulwich Village, SE21. ✆ **020/8693-5254.** www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk. Admission £8 ($16) adults, £7 ($14) seniors, free for students and children. Tues–Fri 10am–5pm; Sat–Sun 11am–5pm. Tube: West Dulwich Station.

Gilbert Collection ★★★ *Finds* In 2000, Somerset House became the permanent home for the Gilbert Collection of decorative arts, one of the most important bequests ever made to England. Sir Arthur Gilbert made his gift of gold, silver, mosaics, and gold snuffboxes to the nation in 1996, at which time the value was estimated at £75 million ($150 million). The array of mosaics is among the most comprehensive ever gathered. The gold and silver collection has exceptional breadth, ranging from the 15th to the 19th centuries, spanning India to South America. The silver collection here is arguably better than the one at the V&A—it's strong in masterpieces of great 18th-century silversmiths, such as Paul de Lamerie. Such exhibits as the Maharajah pieces, the "Gold Crown," and Catherine the Great's Royal Gates are fabulous. The gallery also displays one of the most representative collections of gold snuffboxes in the world, with some 200 examples, including snuffboxes owned by Louis XV, Frederick the Great, and Napoleon.

Somerset House, the Strand, WC2. ✆ **020/7240-9400.** www.gilbert-collection.org.uk. Admission £5 ($10) adults, £4 ($8) seniors, free for ages 17 and under. Daily 10am–6pm. Tube: Temple, Covent Garden, Charing Cross, or Embankment.

Guildhall Art Gallery ★ Since the 1999 reopening of the Guildhall (the original burned down in a 1941 air raid), many famous and much-loved pictures, which for years were known only through

temporary exhibitions and reproductions, are again available for the public to see in a permanent setting. The art ranges from classical to modern. A curiosity is the huge double-height wall built to accommodate Britain's largest independent oil painting, John Singleton Copley's *The Defeat of the Floating Batteries at Gibraltar, September 1782.* The Corporation of London in the City owns these works and has been collecting them since the 17th century. The most popular art is in the Victorian collection, including such favorites as Millais's *My First Sermon* and *My Second Sermon,* and Landseer's *The First Leap.* There is also a landscape of Salisbury Cathedral by John Constable. Since World War II, all paintings acquired by the gallery concentrate on London subjects.

Guildhall Yard, EC2. ✆ **020/7332-3700.** www.guildhall-art-gallery.org.uk. Admission £2.50 ($5) adults, £1 ($2) seniors and students, free for children 15 and under. Free Fri and after 3:30pm on all other days. Mon–Sat 10am–5pm; Sun noon–4pm. Tube: Bank, St. Paul's, Mansion House, or Moorgate.

Imperial War Museum ★ One of the few major sights south of the Thames, this museum occupies 1 city block the size of an army barracks, greeting you with 38-centimeter (15-in.) guns from the battleships *Resolution* and *Ramillies.* The large domed building, constructed in 1815, was the former Bethlehem Royal Hospital for the insane, known as "Bedlam."

A wide range of weapons and equipment is on display, along with models, decorations, uniforms, posters, photographs, and paintings. You can see a Mark V tank, a Battle of Britain Spitfire, and a German one-man submarine, as well as a rifle carried by Lawrence of Arabia. In the Documents Room, you can view the self-styled "political testament" that Hitler dictated in the chancellery bunker in the closing days of World War II, witnessed by henchmen Joseph Goebbels and Martin Bormann, as well as the famous "peace in our time" agreement that Neville Chamberlain brought back from Munich in 1938. It's a world of espionage and clandestine warfare in the major permanent exhibit known as the "Secret War Exhibition," where you can discover the truth behind the image of James Bond—and find out why the real secret war is even stranger and more fascinating than fiction. Displays include many items never before seen in public: coded messages, forged documents, secret wirelesses, and equipment used by spies from World War I to the present day.

Supported by a £12.6-million ($25-million) grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, a permanent Holocaust exhibition now occupies two floors. Through original artifacts, documents, film, and photographs, some lent to the museum by former concentration camps in

Germany and Poland, the display poignantly relates the story of Nazi Germany and the persecution of the Jews. In addition, the exhibit brings attention to the persecution of other groups under Hitler's regime, including Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, people with disabilities, and homosexuals. Among the items on display are a funeral cart used in the Warsaw Ghetto, a section of railcar from Belgium, a sign from the extermination camp at Belzec, and the letters of an 8-year-old French Jewish boy who hid in an orphanage before being sent to Auschwitz.

Another exhibition, called "Crimes Against Humanity," explores the theme of genocide.

Lambeth Rd., SE1. ✆ **020/7416-5321** or 020/7416-5320 (info line). www.iwm.org.uk. Free admission. Daily 10am–6pm. Closed Dec 24–26. Tube: Baker Line to Lambeth North, Elephant and Castle, or Southwark.

Jewish Museum This museum tells the story of Jewish life in Britain. Arriving at the time of the Norman Conquest, Jews survived in England until King Edward I forced them out in 1290. From that time, no Jews (or at least, no known Jews) lived in Britain until a small community returned in 1656 during the reign of Elizabeth I. The museum has recently been awarded designated status by the Museums and Galleries Commission for its outstanding collection of Jewish ceremonial art. On display are silver Torah bells made in London, and two loving cups presented by the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue to the lord mayor in the 18th century. The museum's Ceremonial Art Gallery contains a beautiful 16th-century Venetian ark, one of the oldest preserved in the world. An old English lord bought it from a furniture dealer without knowing what it was, and for years his maid used it as a wardrobe until someone discovered its true identity. The museum also sponsors **walking tours of Jewish London.**

The Jewish Museum has another location in Finchley, which focuses on Jewish immigration and settlement in London. On display are reconstructions of East End tailoring and furniture workshops. Holocaust education is also a fundamental feature of this museum. The Finchley branch is open Monday through Thursday 10:30am to 5pm, and Sunday 10:30am to 4:30pm. Admission is £2 ($4) adults, seniors, and students; children 11 and under are admitted free. For further information, call ✆ **020/8349-1143.**

129–131 Albert St., NW1. ✆ **020/8371-7373.** www.jewishmuseum.org.uk. Main branch admission £3.50 ($7) adults, £2.50 ($5) seniors, £1.50 ($3) students and children, £8 ($16) family. Main branch: Sun 10am–5pm; Mon–Thurs 10am–4pm. Closed Fri–Sat, bank holidays, and Jewish festivals. Tube: Camden Town or Finchley Central.

Linley Sambourne House *Finds* You'll step back into the days of Queen Victoria when you visit this house, which has remained unchanged for more than a century. Built in the late 1860s, this five-story Suffolk brick structure was the home of Linley Sambourne, a legendary cartoonist for *Punch*. In the entrance hall, you'll see the mixture of styles and clutter that typifies Victorian decor, with a plush portière, a fireplace valance, stained glass, and a large set of antlers vying for attention. The drawing room alone contains an incredible number of Victorian items. An actor in period costume leads tours. Allow about 1½ hours for your visit. ***Insider's Tip:*** It's best to prebook your tour by phone.

18 Stafford Terrace, W8. ✆ **020/7602-3316.** www.rbkc.gov.uk/linleysambourne house. Admission £6 ($12) adults, £4 ($8) seniors and students, £1 ($2) children 17 and under. Sat–Sun 11am–3:30pm; Sat–Sun guided tours only (11:15am, and 1, 2:15, and 3:30pm). Closed mid-Mar to mid-June. Tube: High St. Kensington.

Madame Tussaud's *Overrated* *Kids* Madame Tussaud's is not so much a wax museum as an enclosed amusement park. A weird, moving, sometimes terrifying (to children) collage of exhibitions, panoramas, and stage settings, it manages to be most things to most people, most of the time.

Madame Tussaud attended the court of Versailles and learned her craft in France. She personally took the death masks from the guillotined heads of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette (which you'll find among the exhibits). She moved her original museum from Paris to England in 1802. Her exhibition has been imitated in every part of the world, but never with the realism and imagination on hand here. Madame herself molded the features of Benjamin Franklin, whom she met in Paris. All the rest—from George Washington to John F. Kennedy, Mary Queen of Scots to Sylvester Stallone—have been subjects for the same painstaking (and often breathtaking) replication.

In the well-known Chamber of Horrors—a kind of underground dungeon—are all kinds of instruments of death, along with figures of their victims. The shadowy presence of Jack the Ripper lurks in the gloom as you walk through a Victorian London street. Present-day criminals are portrayed within the confines of prison. The latest attraction to open here is "The Spirit of London," a musical ride that depicts 400 years of London's history, using special effects that include audio-animatronic figures that move and speak. Visitors take "time-taxis" that allow them to see and hear "Shakespeare" as he writes and speaks lines, be received by "Queen Elizabeth I," and feel and smell the Great Fire of 1666 that destroyed London.

We've seen these changing exhibitions so many times over the years that we feel they're a bit cheesy, but we still remember the first time we were taken here as kids. We thought it fascinating back then.

Insider's Tip: To avoid the long lines—sometimes more than an hour in summer—call in advance and reserve a ticket for fast pickup at the entrance. If you don't want to bother with that, be aggressive and form a group of nine people waiting in the queue. A group of nine or more can go in almost at once through the "group door." Otherwise, go when the gallery first opens or late in the afternoon when crowds have thinned.

Marylebone Rd., NW1. ✆ **0870/999-0293.** www.madame-tussauds.com. Admission £23 ($46) adults, £20 ($40) seniors, £19 ($38) children 15 and under. ***Note:*** Admission prices can go higher at certain peak periods during the year. Mon–Fri 9:30am–5:30pm; Sat–Sun 9am–6pm. Tube: Baker St.

Museum of London ★★ In London's Barbican district, near St. Paul's Cathedral and overlooking the city's Roman and medieval walls, this museum traces the history of London from prehistoric times to the 20th century through archaeological finds; paintings and prints; social, industrial, and historic artifacts; and costumes, maps, and models. Exhibits are arranged so that you can begin and end your chronological stroll through 250,000 years at the main entrance to the museum. The museum's *pièce de résistance* is the Lord Mayor's Coach, a gilt-and-scarlet fairy-tale coach built in 1757 and weighing in at 3 tons. You can also see the Great Fire of London in living color and sound thanks to an audiovisual presentation; the death mask of Oliver Cromwell; cell doors from Newgate Prison, made famous by Charles Dickens; and most amazing of all, a shop counter showing pre–World War II prices. The World City Gallery examines life in London between 1789 and 1914, the beginning of World War I. Some 2,000 objects are on view.

150 London Wall, EC2. ✆ **087/0444-3851.** www.museumoflondon.org.uk. Free admission. Mon–Sat 10am–5:50pm; Sun 11:30am–5:50pm. Tube: St. Paul's or Barbican.

National Army Museum ★ *Kids* The National Army Museum occupies a building adjoining the Royal Hospital, a home for retired soldiers. Whereas the Imperial War Museum is concerned with wars of the 20th century, the National Army Museum tells the colorful story of British armies from 1485 on. Here you'll find uniforms worn by British soldiers in every corner of the world, plus weapons and other gear, flags, and medals. Even the skeleton of Napoleon's favorite charger is here. Also on display are Florence Nightingale's

jewelry, the telephone switchboard from Hitler's headquarters (captured in 1945), and Orders and Medals of HRH the Duke of Windsor. "The Rise of the Redcoats" contains exhibitions detailing the life of the British soldier from 1485 to 1793 and includes displays on the English Civil War and the American War of Independence.

Royal Hospital Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7730-0717.** www.national-army-museum.ac.uk. Free admission. Daily 10am–5:30pm. Closed Good Friday, 1st Mon in May, and Dec 24–26. Tube: Sloane Sq.

Natural History Museum ★★ *Kids* This is the home of the national collections of living and fossil plants, animals, and minerals, with many magnificent specimens on display. The zoological displays are quite wonderful—not up to the level of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., but still definitely worthwhile. Exciting exhibits designed to encourage people of all ages to learn about natural history include "Human Biology—An Exhibition of Ourselves," "Our Place in Evolution," "Origin of the Species," "Creepy Crawlies," and "Discovering Mammals." The Mineral Gallery displays marvelous examples of crystals and gemstones. Visit the Meteorite Pavilion, which exhibits fragments of rocks that have crashed into the earth, some from the farthest reaches of the galaxy. The dinosaur exhibit attracts the most attention, displaying 14 complete skeletons. "Earth Galleries" is an exhibition outlining humankind's relationship with planet Earth. Here, in the section "Earth Today and Tomorrow," visitors are invited to explore the planet's dramatic history from the big bang to its inevitable death. The latest development here is the new Darwin Centre. Dedicated to the great naturalist Charles Darwin, the center reveals the museum's scientific research and outreach facilities and activities. You're given an insider look at the storage facilities—including 22 million preserved specimens—and the laboratories of the museum. Fourteen behind-the-scenes free tours (ages 10 and up only) are given daily; you should book immediately upon entering the museum if you're interested.

Cromwell Rd., SW7. ✆ **020/7942-5000.** www.nhm.ac.uk. Free admission. Mon–Sat 10am–5:50pm; Sun 11am–5:50pm. Tube: S. Kensington.

The Queen's Gallery ★★ The refurbished gallery on the grounds of Buckingham Palace reopened to the public in 2002 in time for the Golden Jubilee celebration of Queen Elizabeth II. The 1831 building by John Nash was converted to a chapel for Queen Victoria in 1843 and later destroyed in an air raid in 1940. Today, the gallery is dedicated to changing exhibitions of the wide-ranging treasure-trove that forms the Royal Collection. You'll find special

showings of paintings, prints, drawings, watercolors, furniture, porcelain, miniatures, enamels, jewelry, and other works of art. At any given time, you may see such artistic peaks as Van Dyck's equestrian portrait of Charles I; the world-famous *Lady at the Virginal,* by Vermeer; a dazzling array of gold snuffboxes; paintings by Monet from the collection of the late Queen Mother; personal jewelry; studies by Leonardo da Vinci; and even the recent and very controversial portrait of the current queen by Lucian Freud.

Buckingham Palace, Buckingham Palace Rd., SW1. ✆ **020/7766-7301.** www.royalcollection.org.uk. Admission £8 ($16) adults, £7 ($14) students and seniors, £4 ($8) children 5–16, free for children 4 and under. Daily 10am–5:30pm. Tube: Hyde Park Corner, Green Park, or Victoria.

Royal Academy of Arts Established in 1768, this organization counted Sir Joshua Reynolds, Thomas Gainsborough, and Benjamin West among its founding members. Since its beginning, each member has had to donate a work of art, and so, over the years, the academy has built up a sizable collection. The outstanding treasure is Michelangelo's beautiful relief of *Madonna and Child.* The annual Summer Exhibition has been held for more than 200 years; see the "London Calendar of Events" in chapter 1 for details. The main focus of the gallery, however, is on temporary exhibitions which are not related to the Royal Academicians.

Burlington House, Piccadilly, W1. ✆ **020/7300-5760.** www.royalacademy.org.uk. Admission varies from £7–£10 ($14–$20), depending on the exhibition. Sat–Thurs 10am–6pm (last admission 5:30pm); Fri 10am–10pm (last admission 9:30pm). Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Green Park.

Royal Mews ★★ This is where you can get a close look at Her Majesty's State Coach, built in 1761 to the designs of Sir William Chambers and decorated with paintings by Cipriani. Traditionally drawn by eight gray horses, it was used by sovereigns when they traveled to open Parliament and on other state occasions; Queen Elizabeth traveled in it to her 1953 coronation and in 1977 for her Silver Jubilee Procession. You can also pay a visit to the Queen's carriage horses, which are housed here.

Buckingham Palace, Buckingham Palace Rd., SW1. ✆ **020/7766-7322.** www.royalcollection.org.uk. Admission £8.50 ($17) adults, £7.50 ($15) seniors and students; £4.25 ($8.50) children 5–17; £22 ($44) family; free for children 4 and under. Mar 25–July 26 and Sept 26–Oct 31 Mon–Thurs and Sat–Sun 11am–4pm; July 27–Sept 25 daily 10am–5pm. Tube: Green Park or Victoria.

Science Museum ★★★ *Kids* This museum traces the development of science and industry and their influence on everyday life. These scientific collections are among the largest and most significant

anywhere. On display is Stephenson's original rocket and the tiny prototype railroad engine; you can also see Whittle's original jet engine and the *Apollo 10* space module. The King George III Collection of scientific instruments is the highlight of a gallery on 18th-century science. The museum has two hands-on galleries, as well as working models and video displays.

The museum also presents a behind-the-scenes look at the science and technology that went into making the film trilogy *The Lord of the Rings.* Exhibitions showcase the artifacts and animatronics, costumes, and characters from the fable. The exhibition also offers a number of interactive displays—for example, you are given the chance to be shrunk to the size of a hobbit.

Insider's Tip: A large addition to this museum explores such topics as genetics, digital technology, and artificial intelligence. Four floors of a new Welcome Wing shelter half a dozen exhibition areas and a 450-seat IMAX theater. On an upper floor, visitors can learn how DNA was used to identify living relatives of the Bleadon Man, a 2,000-year-old Iron Age man. On the third floor is the computer that Tim Berners-Lee used to design the World Wide Web outside Geneva, writing the first software for it in 1990.

Note also the marvelous interactive consoles placed strategically in locations throughout the museum. These display special itineraries, including directions to the various galleries for families, teens, adults, and those with special interests.

Exhibition Rd., SW7. ✆ **087/0870-4868.** www.sciencemuseum.org.uk. Free admission. Daily 10am–6pm. Closed Dec 24–26. Tube: S. Kensington.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre & Exhibition ★ This is a recent re-creation of what was probably the most important public theater ever built, Shakespeare's Globe, on the exact site where many of Shakespeare's plays opened. The late American filmmaker Sam Wanamaker worked for some 20 years to raise funds to re-create the theater as it existed in Elizabethan times, thatched roof and all. A fascinating exhibit tells the story of the Globe's construction, using the material (including goat hair in the plaster), techniques, and craftsmanship of 400 years ago. The new Globe isn't an exact replica: It seats 1,500 patrons, not the 3,000 who regularly squeezed in during the early 1600s, and this thatched roof has been specially treated with a fire retardant. Guided tours of the facility are offered throughout the day.

See review on p. 7 for details on attending a play here.

21 New Globe Walk, SE1. ✆ **020/7902-1500.** www.shakespeares-globe.org. Admission £9 ($18) adults, £7.50 ($15) seniors and students, £6.50 ($13) children 15 and under. Oct–Apr daily 10am–7:30pm; May–Sept daily 9am–noon and 12:30–5pm. Tube: Mansion House or London Bridge.

Sir John Soane's Museum ★ This is the former home of Sir John Soane (1753–1837), an architect who rebuilt the Bank of England (although not the present structure). With his multiple levels, fool-the-eye mirrors, flying arches, and domes, Soane was a master of perspective and a genius of interior space (his picture gallery, for example, is filled with three times the number of paintings that a room of similar dimensions would normally hold). One prize of the collection is William Hogarth's satirical series *The Rake's Progress,* which includes his much-reproduced *Orgy and The Election,* a satire on mid-18th-century politics. Soane also filled his house with classical sculpture: The sarcophagus of Pharaoh Seti I, found in a burial chamber in the Valley of the Kings, is here.

13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, WC2. ✆ **020/7405-2107.** www.soane.org. Free admission (donations invited). Tues–Sat 10am–5pm; 1st Tues of each month 6–9pm. Tours given Sat at 2:30pm; £5 ($10) tickets distributed at 2pm, first-come, first-served (group tours by appointment only). Tube: Holborn.

Wallace Collection ★★ *Finds* Located in a palatial setting (the modestly described "town house" of the late Lady Wallace), this collection is a contrasting array of art and armaments. The collection is evocative of the Frick Museum in New York and the Musée d'Jacque André in Paris. The art collection includes works by Watteau, Boucher, Fragonard, and Greuze, as well as such classics as Frans Hals's *Laughing Cavalier* and Rembrandt's portrait of his son Titus. The paintings of the Dutch, English, Spanish, and Italian schools are outstanding. The collection also contains important 18th-century French decorative art, including furniture from royal palaces, Sèvres porcelain, and gold boxes. The European and Asian armaments, on the ground floor, are works of art in their own right.

Manchester Sq., W1. ✆ **020/7563-9500.** www.the-wallace-collection.org.uk. Free admission (some exhibits require admission). Daily 10am–5pm. Tube: Bond St. or Baker St.

PARKS & GARDENS

London's parks are the most advanced system of "green lungs" in any large city on the globe. Although not as rigidly maintained as those of Paris (Britons traditionally prefer a more natural look), they're cared for with a loving and lavishly artistic hand that puts their American counterparts to shame.

The largest of the central London parks is **Hyde Park** ★★ (Tube: Marble Arch, Hyde Park Corner, or Lancaster Gate), once a favorite deer-hunting ground of Henry VIII. With the adjoining Kensington Gardens (see below), it covers 246 hectares (608 acres) of central London with velvety lawns interspersed with ponds, flower beds, and trees. Running through its width is a 17-hectare (41-acre) lake known as the **Serpentine,** where you can row, sail model boats, or swim (provided you don't mind sub-Florida water temperatures). **Rotten Row,** a 2.5km (1½-mile) sand riding track, attracts some skilled equestrians on Sunday. You can rent a paddleboat or a rowboat from the boathouse (open Mar–Oct) on the north side of **Hyde Park's Serpentine** (✆ **020/7262-1330**).

At the northeastern tip of Hyde Park, near Marble Arch, is **Speakers Corner** (www.speakerscorner.net). Since 1855 (before the legal right to assembly was guaranteed), people have been getting on their soapboxes about any and every subject under the sun. In the past you might have heard Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, or Lenin, and almost certainly William Morris and George Orwell. The corpse of Oliver Cromwell was hung here in a cage for the public to gape at or throw rotten eggs at. The king wanted to warn others against what might happen to them if they wished to abolish the monarchy. Hecklers, often aggressive, are part of the fun. Anyone can speak; just don't blaspheme, use obscene language, or start a riot.

Blending with Hyde Park and bordering the grounds of Kensington Palace, well-manicured **Kensington Gardens** (Tube: High St. Kensington or Queensway) contains the famous statue of Peter Pan, with bronze rabbits that toddlers are always trying to kidnap. The park is also home to that Victorian extravaganza, the Albert Memorial. The Orangery is an ideal place to take afternoon tea.

East of Hyde Park, across Piccadilly, stretch **Green Park** ★ (Tube: Green Park) and **St. James's Park** ★ (Tube: St. James's Park), forming a chain of landscaped beauty. These parks are ideal for picnics; you'll find it hard to believe that this was once a swamp near a leper hospital. There's a lake stocked with ducks and pelicans, descendants of the pair the Russian ambassador presented to Charles II in 1662.

Regent's Park ★★★ (Tube: Regent's Park or Baker St.) covers most of the district of that name, north of Baker Street and Marylebone Road. Designed by 18th-century genius John Nash to surround a palace for the prince regent (the palace never materialized), this is the most classically beautiful of London's parks. Its core is a rose garden planted around a small lake alive with waterfowl and spanned by Japanese bridges; in early summer, the rose perfume is

heady in the air. The park is home to the **Open-Air Theatre** and the **London Zoo**. As at all the local parks, hundreds of chairs are scattered around the lawns, waiting for sunbathers. The deck-chair attendants, who rent the chairs for a small fee, are mostly college students on break. Rowboats and sailing dinghies are available in **Regent's Park** (✆ **020/7724-4069;** www.royalparks.org.uk). Sailing and canoeing cost £6.50 ($13) per adult and £4.40 ($8.80) per child for 1 hour.

The hub of England's—and perhaps the world's—horticulture is in Surrey, at the **Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew** (also known as Kew Gardens; ✆ **020/8332-5655;** www.rbgkew.org.uk).

3 Exploring London by Boat

RIVER CRUISES ALONG THE THAMES

A trip up or down the river will give you an entirely different view of London than the one you get from land. You'll see how the city grew along and around the Thames and how many of its landmarks turn their faces toward the water. Several companies operate motor launches from the Westminster piers (Tube: Westminster), offering panoramic views of one of Europe's most historic waterways.

Thames River Services, Westminster Pier, Victoria Embankment, SW1 (✆ **020/7930-4097;** www.westminsterpier.co.uk), concerns itself only with downriver traffic from Westminster Pier to such destinations as Greenwich. The most popular excursion departs for Greenwich (a 50-min. ride) at half-hour intervals between 10am and 4pm in April, May, September, and October, and between 10am and 5pm from June to August; from November to March, boats depart from Westminster Pier at 40-minute intervals daily from 10:40am to 3:20pm. One-way fares are £7.20 ($14) for adults, £6 ($12) for seniors, £3.60 ($7.20) for children 15 and under. Round-trip fares are £9.40 ($19) for adults, £8 ($16) for seniors, £4.70 ($9.40) for children. A family ticket for two adults and up to three children 14 and under costs £21 ($42) one-way, £25 ($50) round-trip.

Westminster Passenger Association (Upriver) Ltd., Westminster Pier, Victoria Embankment, SW1 (✆ **020/7930-2062** or 020/7930-4721; www.wpsa.co.uk), offers the only riverboat service upstream from Westminster Bridge to Kew, Richmond, and Hampton Court, with regular daily sailings from the Monday before Easter until the end of October on traditional riverboats, all with licensed bars. Trip time, one-way, can be as little as 1½ hours to Kew and between 2½ to 4 hours to Hampton Court, depending on the tide.

Bird's-"Eye" View of London

The world's largest observation wheel, the **British Airways London Eye** ★, Millennium Jubilee Gardens (✆ **0870/5000-600;** www.ba-londoneye.com), opened in 2000. It is the fourth-tallest structure in London, offering panoramic views that extend for some 40km (25 miles) if the weather's clear. Passengers are carried in 32 "pods" that make a complete revolution every half-hour. Along the way you'll see some of London's most famous landmarks from a bird's-eye view.

Built out of steel by a European consortium, it was conceived and designed by London architects Julia Barfield and David Marks, who claim inspiration from the Statue of Liberty in New York and the Eiffel Tower in Paris. Some two million visitors are expected to ride the Eye every year.

The Eye lies close to Westminster Bridge (you can hardly miss it). Tickets are £13 ($26) for adults, £10 ($20) for seniors and students, £6.50 ($13) for children 5 to 15. October to May daily 10am to 8pm; June to September daily 10am to 9pm. Tube: Westminster or Waterloo.

Cruises from Westminster Pier to Hampton Court via Kew Gardens leave daily at 10:30, 11:15am, and noon. Round-trip tickets are £20 ($40) for adults, £13 ($26) for seniors, £9.75 ($20) for children ages 4 to 14, £49 ($98) for a family ticket; one child 3 and under accompanied by an adult goes free.

4 Organized Tours

BUS TOURS

For the first-timer, the quickest and most economical way to bring the big city into focus is to take a bus tour. One of the most popular is the **Original London Sightseeing Tour,** which passes by all the major sights in just about 1½ hours. The tour—which uses a traditional double-decker bus with live commentary by a guide—costs £19 ($38) for adults, £12 ($24) for children 5–15; children 4 and under ride free. The tour allows you to hop on or off the bus at any point in the tour at no extra charge.

Departures are from convenient points within the city; you can choose your departure point when you buy your ticket. Tickets can be purchased on the bus or at a discount from any London Transport or London Tourist Board Information Centre. Most hotel concierges also sell tickets. For information or phone purchases, call ✆ **020/8877-1722.** It's also possible to book online at **www.theoriginaltour.com**.

Big Bus Company Ltd., Waterside Way, London SW17 (✆ **020/7233-9533;** www.bigbus.co.uk), operates a 2-hour tour in summer, departing frequently between 8:30am and 4:30pm daily from Marble Arch by Speakers Corner, Green Park by the Ritz Hotel, and Victoria Station (Buckingham Palace Rd. by the Royal Westminster Hotel). Tours cover the highlights—18 in all—ranging from the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey to the Tower of London and Buckingham Palace (exterior looks only), accompanied by live commentary. The cost is £22 ($44) for adults, £10 ($20) for children. A 1-hour tour follows the same route but covers only 13 sights. Tickets are valid all day; you can hop on and off the bus as you wish.

WALKING TOURS

The **Original London Walks,** 87 Messina Ave., P.O. Box 1708, London NW6 4LW (✆ **020/7624-3978;** www.walks.com), the oldest established walking-tour company in London, is run by an Anglo-American journalist/actor couple, David and Mary Tucker. Their hallmarks are variety, reliability, reasonably sized groups, and—above all—superb guides. The renowned crime historian Donald Rumbelow, the leading authority on Jack the Ripper and author of the classic guidebook *London Walks,* is a regular guide, as are several prominent actors (including classical actor Edward Petherbridge). Walks are regularly scheduled daily and cost £6 ($12) for adults, £5 ($10) for students and seniors; children 14 and under go free. Call for a schedule; no reservations needed.

5 Shopping

Although London is one of the world's best shopping cities, it often seems made solely for wealthy visitors. To find real values, do what most Londoners do: Wait for sales or search out discount stores.

American-style shopping has taken Britain by storm, in concept—warehouse stores and outlet malls—and in actual name: One block from Hamleys, you'll find the Disney Store. Gap is everywhere, and Tiffany sells more wedding gifts than Asprey these days. Still, your best bet is to concentrate on British goods. You can also do well with French products; values are almost as good as in Paris.

1 Central London Shopping

Thankfully for those pressed for time, several key streets offer some (or even all) of London's best retail stores, compactly located in a niche or neighborhood so you can just stroll and shop.

THE WEST END As a neighborhood, The West End includes Mayfair and is home to the core of London's big-name shopping. Most of the department stores, designer shops, and multiples (chain stores) have their flagships in this area.

The key streets are **Oxford Street** (in either direction) for affordable shopping (start at Marble Arch Tube station if you're ambitious, or Bond St. station if you care to see only some of it), and **Regent Street,** which intersects Oxford Street at Oxford Circus (Tube: Oxford Circus). The Oxford Street flagship (at Marble Arch) of the private-label department store Marks & Spencer ("Marks & Sparks" in the local parlance) is worth visiting for quality goods. Regent Street, which leads all the way to Piccadilly, has more upscale department stores (including the famed Liberty of London), chains (Laura Ashley), and specialty dealers.

Parallel to Regent Street, **Bond Street** (Tube: Bond St.) connects Piccadilly with Oxford Street and is synonymous with the luxury trade. Divided into New and Old, it has experienced a recent revival and is the hot address for international designers—Donna Karan has

Tips How to Get Your VAT Refund

You *must* get your VAT refund form from the retailer. Several readers have reported that merchants have told them they can get refund forms at the airport as they leave the country. *This is not true.* Don't leave the store without a form—it must be completed by the retailer on the spot. After you have asked if the store does VAT refunds and determined their minimum, request the paperwork.

Global Refund (www.globalrefund.com) is your best bet for getting VAT refunds at the airport. Shop where you see the Global Refund Tax-Free Shopping sign, and ask for a Global Refund Tax-Free check when you purchase your items.

Fill out your form and then present it—with the goods, receipts, and passports—at the Customs office in the airport. Allow an hour to stand in line. ***Remember:*** You're required to show the goods, so put them in your carry-on.

Once the paperwork has been stamped, you have two choices: You can mail the papers (remember to bring a stamp) and receive your refund as a British check (no!) or a credit card refund (yes!), or go to the Cash VAT Refund desk at the airport and get your refund in cash. Know that if you accept cash other than British pounds, you will lose money on the conversion.

Many stores charge a fee for processing your refund, so £3 to £5 ($6–$10) may be deducted from the total you receive. But since the VAT in Britain is 17.5%, it's worth the trouble to get the money back.

Note: If you're heading to other countries in the European Union, you should file all of your VAT refunds at once at your final E.U. destination.

two shops here. A slew of international hotshots, from Chanel to Ferragamo, to Versace, have digs nearby.

Burlington Arcade (Tube: Piccadilly Circus), the famous glass-roofed, Regency-style passage leading off Piccadilly, looks like a period exhibition and is lined with intriguing shops and boutiques. Lit by wrought-iron lamps and decorated with clusters of ferns and flowers, its small, smart stores specialize in fashion, jewelry, Irish

linen, cashmere, and more. If you linger there until 5:30pm, you can watch the beadles (the last London representatives of Britain's oldest police force), in their black-and-yellow livery and top hats, ceremoniously place the iron grills that block off the arcade until 9am, at which time they just as ceremoniously remove them to start a new business day. (There are only 3 beadles remaining.) Also at 5:30pm, a hand bell called the Burlington Bell is sounded, signaling the end of trading.

For a total contrast, check out **Jermyn Street** (Tube: Piccadilly Circus), on the far side of Piccadilly, a tiny 2-block-long street devoted to high-end men's haberdashers and toiletries shops; many have been doing business for centuries. Several hold royal warrants, including Turnbull & Asser, where HRH Prince Charles has his pj's made. A bit to the northwest, Savile Row (btw. Regent and New Bond sts.) is synonymous with the finest in men's tailoring.

The West End theater district borders two more shopping areas: the still-not-ready-for-prime-time **Soho** (Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.), where the sex shops are slowly converting into cutting-edge designer boutiques, and **Covent Garden** (Tube: Covent Garden), a shopping masterpiece full of fashion, food, books, and everything else. The original Covent Garden marketplace has overflowed its boundaries and eaten up the surrounding neighborhood; it's fun to wander the narrow streets and shop. Covent Garden is mobbed on Sundays.

Just a stone's throw from Covent Garden, **Monmouth Street** is somewhat of a London shopping secret: Londoners know they can find a wide array of stores in a space of only 2 blocks. Many shops here are outlets for British designers and some along this street sell both used and new clothing. In addition, stores specialize in everything from musical instruments from the Far East to palm and crystal-ball readings.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE & CHELSEA Knightsbridge (Tube: Knightsbridge), the home of Harrods, is the second-most-famous London retail district. (Oxford St. edges it out.) Nearby Sloane Street is chock-a-block with designer shops.

Walk southwest on **Brompton Road** (toward The Victoria and Albert Museum) and you'll find **Cheval Place,** lined with designer resale shops, and Beauchamp (*Bee*-cham) Place. It's only a block long, but it's very "Sloane Ranger" or "Sloanie" (as the Brits would say), featuring the kinds of shops where young British aristocrats buy their clothing for the "season."

If you walk farther along Brompton Road, you'll connect to **Brompton Cross,** another hip area for designer shops made popular when Michelin House was rehabbed by Sir Terence Conran, becoming the Conran Shop. Seek out **Walton Street,** a tiny snake of a street running from Brompton Cross back toward the museums. Most of the shops here specialize in nonessential luxury products, the kind a severe and judgmental Victorian moralist might dismiss as vanities and fripperies. This is where you'll find aromatherapy from Jo Malone, needlepoint, and costume jewelry. **King's Road** (Tube: Sloane Sq.), the main street of Chelsea, will forever remain a symbol of the Swinging '60s. It's still popular with the young crowd, but there are fewer mohawk haircuts, Bovver boots, and Edwardian ball gowns than before. More and more, King's Road is a lineup of markets and "multistores," conglomerations of indoor stands, stalls, and booths within one building or enclosure. About a third of King's Road is devoted to "multistore" antiques markets, another third houses design-trade showrooms and stores of household wares, and the remaining third is faithful to the area's teeny-bopper roots.

Finally, don't forget all those museums in nearby **South Kensington**—they all have great gift shops.

KENSINGTON, NOTTING HILL & BAYSWATER **Kensington High Street** (Tube: High St. Kensington) is the hangout of the classier breed of teen, the one who has graduated from Carnaby Street and is ready for street chic. While there are a few staples of basic British fashion here, most of the stores feature items that stretch and are very, very short, very, very tight, and very, very black.

From Kensington High Street, you can walk up **Kensington Church Street,** which, like Portobello Road is one of the city's main shopping avenues for antiques, selling everything from antique furniture to Impressionist paintings.

Kensington Church Street dead-ends at the Notting Hill Gate Tube station, jumping-off point for Portobello Road, whose antiques dealers and weekend market are 2 blocks beyond.

Not far from Notting Hill Gate is **Whiteleys of Bayswater,** 151 Queensway, W2 (✆ **020/7229-8844;** www.whiteleys.com; Tube: Bayswater or Queensway), an Edwardian mall whose chief tenant is Marks & Spencer. Whiteleys also contains 75 to 85 other shops, mostly specialty outlets, plus restaurants, cafes, bars, and an eight-screen movie theater.

2 The Department Stores

Contrary to popular belief, Harrods is not the only department store in London. The British invented the department store, and they have lots of them, mostly in Mayfair, and each has its own customer profile.

Fortnum & Mason ★★★ Catering to well-heeled clients as a full-service department store since 1707, Fortnum & Mason is better than ever. Offerings include one of the most comprehensive delicatessens and food markets in London, as well as stationery, gift items, porcelain and crystal, and lots and lots of clothing for men, women, and children. 181 Piccadilly, W1. ✆ **020/7734-8040.** www.fortnumandmason.com. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

Harrods Harrods remains an institution, but in the last decade or so, it has grown increasingly dowdy and is not nearly as cutting edge as it used to be. For the latest trends, shop elsewhere. However, we always stop here during our visits to London. As entrenched in English life as Buckingham Palace and the Ascot Races, it's still an elaborate emporium. Goods are spread across 300 departments, and the range, variety, and quality will still dazzle the visiting out-of-towner.

The whole fifth floor is devoted to sports and leisure, with a wide range of equipment and attire. Toy Kingdom is on the fourth floor, along with children's wear. The Egyptian Hall, on the ground floor, sells crystal from Lalique and Baccarat, plus porcelain.

There are also a barber, a jewelry department, and a fashion department for younger customers. You'll have a choice of 18 restaurants and bars. Best of all are the **Food Halls,** with a huge variety of foods and several cafes. Harrods began as a grocer in 1849, and food and drinks are still the heart of the business. The motto remains "If you can eat or drink it, you'll find it at Harrods." 87–135 Brompton Rd., SW1. ✆ **020/8479-5100.** www.harrods.com. Tube: Knightsbridge.

Harvey Nichols Locals call it "Harvey Nicks." Once a favorite of the late Princess Di, this store is large, but it doesn't compete directly with Harrods because it has a more upmarket, fashionable image. Harvey Nicks has its own gourmet food hall and fancy restaurant, the **Fifth Floor,** and is crammed with the best in designer home furnishings, gifts, and fashions for all, although women's clothing is the largest segment of its business. The store carries many American designer brands; avoid them, as they're more expensive in London than they are in the U.S. 109–125 Knightsbridge, SW1. ✆ **020/7235-5000.** www.harveysnichols.com. Tube: Knightsbridge.

Liberty ★★ This department store is celebrated for its Liberty Prints: top-echelon fabrics, often in floral patterns, prized by decorators for the way they add a sense of English tradition to a room. The front part of the Regent Street store isn't particularly distinctive, but don't be fooled: Other parts of the place have been restored to Tudor-style splendor that includes half-timbering and interior paneling. There are six floors of fashion, china, and home furnishings, including the famous Liberty Print fashion fabrics, upholstery fabrics, scarves, ties, luggage, gifts, and more. 210–220 Regent St., W1. ✆ **020/7823-3900.** www.liberty.co.uk. Tube: Oxford Circus.

Peter Jones Founded in 1877 and rebuilt in 1936, Peter Jones is known for household goods, household fabrics and trims, china, glass, upholstered furniture, and linens. The linen department is one of the best in London. Sloane Sq., SW1. ✆ **020/7730-3434.** www.peterjones.co.uk. Tube: Sloane Sq.

3 Goods A to Z

ANTIQUES

Also check out the description of **Portobello Market** on p. 166.

Alfie's Antique Market This is the biggest (and one of the best-stocked) conglomerates of antiques dealers in London, crammed into the premises of a 19th-century store. It has more than 370 stalls, showrooms, and workshops in over 3,252 sq. m (35,000 sq. ft.) of floor space. You'll find the biggest Susie Cooper (a well-known designer of tableware and ceramics for Wedgwood) collection in Europe here. A whole antiques district has grown up around Alfie's along Church Street. 13–25 Church St., NW8. ✆ **020/7723-6066.** Fax 020/7724-0999. www.alfiesantiques.com. Tube: Marylebone or Edgware Rd.

Bond Street Antiques Centre ★★ This place, in the heart of London's finest shopping district, enjoys a reputation for being London's preeminent center for antique jewelry, silver, watches, porcelain, glass, and Asian antiques and paintings. 124 New Bond St., W1. ✆ **020/7351-5353.** www.bondstreetantiques.com. Tube: Bond St. or Green Park.

Grays Antiques and Grays Mews These markets have been converted into walk-in stands with independent dealers. Here, the term *antiques* covers items from oil paintings to, say, the 1894 edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica.* Also sold are antique jewelry; silver; gold; maps and prints; bronzes and ivories; arms and armor; Victorian and Edwardian toys; furniture; Art Nouveau and Art Deco items; antique lace; scientific instruments; craft tools; and Asian,

Persian, and Islamic pottery, porcelain, miniatures, and antiquities. There's a cafe in each building. Check out the 1950s-style **Victory Cafe** on Davies Street for their homemade cakes. 58 Davies St. and 1–7 Davies Mews, W1. ✆ **020/7629-7034.** www.graysantiques.com. Tube: Bond St.

ART & CRAFTS

ACAVA *Finds* This London-based visual-arts organization provides studios and other services for professional artists, and represents about 250 artists working in spaces around London. Call for individual open-studio schedules, as well as dates for the annual Open Studios weekend. 54 Blechynden St., W1. ✆ **020/8960-5015.** www.acava.org.

Contemporary Applied Arts ★ This association encourages traditional and progressive contemporary artwork. Many of Britain's best-established craftspeople, as well as promising talents, are represented within this contemporary-looking space. The gallery houses a diverse display of glass, ceramics, textiles, wood, furniture, jewelry, and metalwork—all by contemporary artisans. A program of special exhibitions, including solo and small-group shows, focuses on innovations in craftwork. There are new exhibitions every 6 weeks. 2 Percy St., W1. ✆ **020/7436-2344.** www.caa.org.uk. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

England & Co. Under the guidance of Jane England, this gallery specializes in Outsider Art and Art in Boxes (that is, art that incorporates a box structure into the composition or frame of a 3-D work). The gallery focuses attention on neglected postwar British artists such as Tony Stubbings and Ralph Romney. One-person and group shows are mounted frequently, and many young artists get early exposure here. 216 Westbourne Grove, W11. ✆ **020/7221-0417.** www.englandgallery.com. Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

Gabriel's Wharf This South Bank complex of shops, restaurants, and bars is open Tuesday to Sunday 11am to 6pm (dining and drinking establishments are open later). Lying 2 minutes by foot from Oxo Tower Wharf, it is filled with some of London's most skilled craftspeople, turning out original pieces of sculpture, jewelry, ceramics, art, and fashion. Food, fashion, art, and crafts await you here, making this place a lot of fun to poke around. 56 Upper Ground, SE1. ✆ **020/7021-1686.** www.gabrielswharf.co.uk. Tube: Blackfriars, Southwark, Waterloo, or Embankment.

Grosvenor Prints London's largest stock of antique prints, ranging from the 17th up to the 20th centuries, is on sale here. Obviously, views of London are the biggest-selling items. Some prints depict significant moments in the city's history, including the Great

Fire. Of course, the British are great animal lovers, so expect plenty of prints of dogs and horses. 19 Shelton St., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-1979.** www.grosvenorprints.com. Tube: Covent Garden.

Kelly Hoppen The British press has labeled interior designer Kelly Hoppen as its own minimalist Martha Stewart (prescandal, of course). Hoppen's designer emporium on Fulham Road opened to great fanfare, and even Hoppen herself has been pleased with the "stock just flying out." Expect a little bit of everything here, including her own charming medley of ceramics (some designed for Wedgwood), furniture, and original accessories such as giant horn buttons or pony-skin bags from Argentina. 177 Fulham Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7351-1910.** www.kellyhoppen.com. Tube: S. Kensington.

BATH & BODY

The Body Shop There's a branch of the Body Shop in every shopping area and tourist zone in London. Some are bigger than others, but all are filled with politically and environmentally friendly beauty, bath, and aromatherapy products. Prices are much lower in the U.K. than they are in the U.S. There's an entire children's line, a men's line, and lots of travel sizes and travel products. 374 Oxford St., W1. ✆ **020/7409-7868.** www.bodyshop.com. Tube: Bond St. Other locations throughout London.

Boots the Chemist This store has branches all over Britain. The house brands of beauty products are usually the best, including the original Boots line (try the cucumber facial mask), Boots's versions of the Body Shop (two lines, Global and Naturalistic), and Boots's versions of Chanel makeup (called No. 7). They also sell film, pantyhose (called tights), sandwiches, and all of life's other little necessities. 490 Oxford St., W1G. ✆ **020/7491-8546.** www.boots.com. Tube: Marble Arch. Other locations throughout London.

Culpeper the Herbalist ★ You'll have to put up with a cramped space to check out all the food, bath, and aromatherapy products, but it's worth it. Stock up on essential oils, or go for the dream pillows, candles, and sachets. The Market, Covent Garden, WC2. ✆ **020/7379-6698.** www.culpeper.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden.

Floris ★★ A variety of toilet articles and fragrances fill Floris's floor-to-ceiling mahogany cabinets, which are architectural curiosities in their own right. They were installed relatively late in the establishment's history—that is, 1851—long after the shop had received its royal warrants as suppliers of toilet articles to the King and

Queen. 89 Jermyn St., SW1. ✆ **0845/702-3239.** www.florislondon.com. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

Penhaligon's ★★★ This Victorian perfumery, established in 1870, holds royal warrants to HRH Duke of Edinburgh and HRH Prince of Wales. All items sold are exclusive to Penhaligon's. The store offers a large selection of perfume, after-shave, soap, and bath oils for women and men. Gifts include antique-silver scent bottles, grooming accessories, and leather traveling goods. Penhaligon's is now in more than 20 Saks Fifth Avenue stores across the United States. 41 Wellington St., WC2. ✆ **020/7621-3444.** www.penhaligons.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden.

BOOKS, MAPS & ENGRAVINGS

In addition to the bookstores below, **Waterstone's** ★★★, 203–206 Piccadilly, SW1 (✆ **020/7851-2400;** www.waterstones.com), is the largest bookstore in Europe—and it even has a bar.

Children's Book Centre With thousands of titles, this is the best place to go for children's books. Fiction is arranged according to age, up to 16. There are also videos and toys for kids. 237 Kensington High St., W8. ✆ **020/7937-7497.** Tube: Kensington.

Foyle's Bookshop Claiming to be the world's largest bookstore, Foyle's has an impressive array of hardcovers and paperbacks, as well as travel maps, new records, CDs, videotapes, and sheet music. The store also has a cafe and "jazz shop," which sometimes hosts live performances. Foyles also has a tradition of rehousing local independent bookstores forced to close because of high rents—for example, it now carries the stock of Silver Moon, once the best-known women's bookstore in London. 113–119 Charing Cross Rd., WC2. ✆ **020/7437-5660.** www.foyles.co.uk. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd. or Leicester Sq.

Gay's the Word Britain's leading gay and lesbian bookstore offers a large selection of books, as well as magazines, cards, and guides. There's also a used-books section. 66 Marchmont St., WC1. ✆ **020/7278-7654.** www.gaystheword.co.uk. Tube: Russell Sq.

Hatchards On the south side of Piccadilly, Hatchards offers a wide range of books on all subjects and is particularly renowned in the areas of fiction, biography, travel, cookery, gardening, art, history, and finance. In addition, Hatchards is second to none in its range of books on royalty. 187 Piccadilly, W1. ✆ **020/7439-9921.** www.hatchards.co.uk. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Green Park.

The Map House of London An ideal place to find an offbeat souvenir. The Map House sells antique maps and engravings, plus a vast selection of old prints of London and England, both original and reproduction. The cost of a century-old original engraving begins at £24 ($48). 54 Beauchamp Place, SW3. ✆ **020/7589-4325.** www.themaphouse.com. Tube: Knightsbridge.

Murder One *Finds* Maxim Jakubowski's bookshop is dedicated to the genres of crime, romance, science fiction, and horror. Crime and science fiction magazines, some of them obscure, are also available. 76–78 Charing Cross Rd., WC2. ✆ **020/7734-3483.** www.murderone.co.uk. Tube: Leicester Sq.

Stanfords Established in 1852, Stanfords is the world's largest map shop. Many maps, including worldwide touring and survey maps, are unavailable elsewhere. It's also London's best travel bookstore (with a complete selection of Frommer's guides!). 12–14 Long Acre, WC2. ✆ **020/7836-1321.** www.stanfords.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden.

CASHMERE & WOOLENS

Belinda Robertson Some of the most beautiful and most chic cashmeres, in lovely colors, are sold at this centrally located outlet at Knightsbridge. Bold colors are a hallmark of Ms. Robertson's designs, ranging from carnival red to canary yellow. She designs for women, men, and children. 4 W. Halkin St., SW1. ✆ **020/7235-0519.** www.belindarobertson.com. Tube: Knightsbridge.

Berk This store boasts one of the largest collections of cashmere sweaters in London—at least the top brands. The outlet also carries capes, stoles, scarves, and camel hair sweaters. 46 Burlington Arcade, W1. ✆ **020/7493-0028.** www.berkcashmere.co.uk. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Green Park.

CHINA, GLASS & SILVER

London Silver Vaults ★ *Finds* Don't let the out-of-the-way location or the facade's lack of charm slow you down. Downstairs you'll enter vaults—40 in all—filled with tons of silver and silverplate, plus collections of jewelry. It's a staggering selection of old and new, with excellent prices and friendly dealers. Chancery House, 53–64 Chancery Lane, WC2. ✆ **020/7242-3844.** www.thesilvervaults.com. Tube: Chancery Lane.

Reject China Shop *Value* Don't expect too many rejects or too many bargains, despite the name. This shop sells seconds (sometimes) along with first-quality pieces of china from such names as Royal Doulton, Spode, and Wedgwood. You can also find a variety

of crystal, glassware, and flatware. If you'd like to have your purchases shipped home for you, the shop can do it for a fee. 183 Brompton Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7581-0739.** Tube: Knightsbridge. Other locations throughout London.

Royal Doulton ★★★ Founded in the 1930s, this company has one of the largest inventories of china in Britain. A wide range of English bone china, as well as crystal and giftware, is sold. The firm (www.royaldoulton.com) no longer operates its own outlet in London. But its products are sold in many upmarket stores, notably **Selfridges** at 400 Oxford St., W1 (✆ **0870/837-7377;** Tube: Bond St.), and **John Lewis,** 278-306 Oxford St., W1 (✆ **020/7629-7711;** Tube: Bond St.).

Thomas Goode ★★ This is one of the most famous emporiums in Britain; it's worth visiting for its architectural interest and nostalgic allure alone. Originally built in 1876, Goode's has 14 rooms loaded with porcelain, gifts, candles, silver, tableware, and even a private museum. There's also a tearoom-cum-restaurant tucked into the corner. 19 S. Audley St., W1. ✆ **020/7499-2823.** www.thomasgoode.co.uk. Tube: Bond St., Green Park, Marble Arch, or Hyde Park.

FASHION

We have divided this category into "Classic," "Cutting Edge," and "Vintage & Secondhand," below.

CLASSIC

While every internationally known designer worth his or her weight in Shantung silk has a boutique in London, the best buys are on the sturdy English styles that last forever. See also the separate sections on "Cashmere & Woolens," "Handbags," "Jewelry," and "Shoes."

Austin Reed Austin Reed has long stood for superior-quality clothing and excellent tailoring. Chester Barrie's off-the-rack suits, for example, are said to fit like tailor-made. The polite employees are unusually honest about telling you what looks good. The store always has a wide variety of top-notch jackets and suits, and men can outfit themselves from dressing gowns to overcoats. For women, there are carefully selected suits, separates, coats, shirts, knitwear, and accessories. 103–113 Regent St., W1. ✆ **020/7534-7777.** www.austinreed.co.uk. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

Beau Monde This outlet earns its fame selling chic "nouvelle couture" for women—fitted and adjusted to your body. All designs are by the locally famous London designer Sylvia Young. Her design

philosophy is that a busy woman should be conscious of fashion, but not a victim of its whims, and clothes should work for her—not against her. Her womenswear is comfortable and fashionable, but not stuffy. 20 Kingly St., W1. ✆ **020/7734-6563.** www.beaumonde.uk.com. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

Burberry ★★★ The name has been synonymous with raincoats ever since Edward VII ordered his valet to "bring my Burberry" when the skies threatened. An impeccably trained staff sells the famous raincoats, plus excellent men's shirts, sportswear, knitwear, and accessories. Raincoats are available in women's sizes and styles as well. Prices are high, but you get quality and prestige. 157-167 Regent St., SW1. ✆ **020/7806-1328.** www.burberry.com. Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

Designer Sale UK *Value* Amazingly, you can sometimes get 90% off designer clothing for both men and women at this outlet. Of course, you've got to sift through 140 rails of clothing and accessories, much of which had a good reason for not selling in the first place. The shop claims it caters to both the discerning label lover and the devoted bargain hunter. Yes, those rails carry Stella McCartney, Vivienne Westwood, Alexander McQueen, and a lot of the lesser lights in designer fashion. A £2 ($4) admission is charged to attend the sale. Studio 85, Old Truman Brewery, 95A Brick Lane, E1. ✆ **01273/470880** in Lewes. Tube: Aldgate E. or Liverpool St.

Hilditch & Key ★★ The finest name in men's shirts, Hilditch & Key has been in business since 1899. The two shops on this street both offer men's clothing (including a custom-made shirt service) and women's ready-made shirts. There's also an outstanding tie collection. Shirts go for half-price during the twice-yearly sales (in Jan and June); men fly in from all over the world for them. 37 and 73 Jermyn St., SW1. ✆ **020/7734-4707.** www.hilditchandkey.co.uk. Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Green Park.

Jigsaw Branches of this fashion chain are numerous, but the Long Acre branch features trendy, middle-market womenswear. 21 Long Acre, WC2. ✆ **020/7240-3855.** www.jigsaw-online.com. Tube: Covent Garden.

Next This chain of "affordable fashion" stores saw its heyday in the 1980s, when it was celebrated for its success in marketing avant-garde fashion ideas to a wide spectrum of the British public. No longer at its peak, it still merits a stop. The look remains very contemporary, with a Continental flair, and there are clothes for men, women, and kids. 15–17 Long Acre, WC2. ✆ **0844/844-5325.** www.next.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden. Other locations throughout London.

Thomas Pink ★★★ This Jermyn Street shirt-maker, named after an 18th-century Mayfair tailor, gave the world the phrase "in the pink." It has a prestigious reputation for well-made cotton shirts for both men and women. The shirts are created from the finest two-fold Egyptian and Sea Island pure-cotton poplin. Some patterns are classic, others new and unusual. All are generously cut with long tails and finished with a choice of double cuffs or single-button cuffs. A small pink square in the tail tells all. 85 Jermyn St., SW1. ✆ **020/7930-6364.** www.thomaspink.com. Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus.

CUTTING EDGE

Warning: With the current exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the British pound, cutting-edge fashion has now priced itself out of the market for the average shopper unless you're married to Bill Gates. If you demand the very best, at least look for sales, or else patronize some of our more democratically priced establishments, even secondhand stores. Sometimes still fashionable dresses or gowns have been worn only two or three times at the most.

Currently, the most cutting-edge shopping area in London is **Conduit Street,** W1, in Mayfair (Tube: Oxford Circus or Green Park). Once known for its dowdy airline offices, it is now London's smartest fashion street. Trendy shops are opening between Regent Street and the "blue-chip" boutiques of New Bond Street. Current stars include **Vivienne Westwood,** 44 Conduit St., W1 (✆ **020/7924-4747;** www.viviennewestwood.com), who has left her punk origins behind and is now the grande dame of English fashion. See below for her flagship store. **Krizia,** 25 Conduit St., W1 (✆ **020/7491-4987;** www.krizia.net), the fashion rage of Rome since the 1950s, displays not only Krizia's clothing lines, but her luxury home goods as well.

For muted fashion elegance, **Yohji Yamamoto,** 14–15 Conduit St., W1 (✆ **020/7491-4129**), is hard to beat, and **Issey Miyake,** 52 Conduit St., W1 (✆ **020/7851-4620;** www.isseymiyake.com), is the Japanese master of minimalism.

Accessorize *Value* This aptly named store is often packed with women who have an eye for bargains but want top-notch style. The store stays abreast of the latest fads and trends, especially in evening bags, which range from antique to high fashion. All sorts of treasures are stocked here, everything from hologram-flecked nail polish to silk scarves. 123A Kensington High St., W8. ✆ **020/7937-1433.** www.monsoon.co.uk. Tube: High St. Kensington.

The Comeback of Carnaby Street

What happened to Carnaby Street? Is it just a faded echo left over from the Swinging '60s? That was true for a long time. But Carnaby is rising again. A new influx of talented designers and offbeat shops are popping up not only on Carnaby, but along its offshoot streets—Newburgh; Foubert's Place; Kingly Street; Marlborough Court; and Lowndes Court. Innovative boutiques seem to open each week behind small Georgian shop fronts.

Among the zillions of shops are such favorites as **Lambretta Clothing,** 29 Carnaby St., W1 (✆ **020/7437-7078;** www.lambrettaclothing.co.uk), which retains the mod lifestyle philosophy and has launched a range of casual wear for men and footwear for men and women. The line has a retro feel but uses the latest fibers and fabric finishes of today. **Stella McCartney,** 30 Bruton St., W1 (✆ **020/7518-3100;** www.stellamccartney.com; Tube: Bond St.) is a showcase for the clothing designs of Paul McCartney's daughter. Vegetarians and animal lovers adore her "no leather, no suede, and no fur policy," while *fashionistas* seek out the chic look of her designs. Both male and female clients are shown to a drawing room on the second floor of this glamorous Mayfair town house where they are presented with some 50 illustrations for trousers, jackets, skirts, and overcoats—all of which are very expensive. Another hot store is **Office,** 16 Carnaby St. (✆ **020/7434-2530;** www.office.co.uk), selling chic and well-designed footwear for both men and women.

To reach the stores above, take the Tube to Oxford Circus.

Anya Hindmarch Although her fashionable bags are sold at Harvey Nichols, Liberty, Harrods, and throughout the U.S. and Europe, this is the only place to see the complete range of Anya Hindmarch's handbags, wallets, purses, and key holders. Smaller items start at £45 ($90), whereas handbag prices start at £165 ($330), with alligator being the most expensive. The outlet is famous for its "Be a Bag" merchandise. You supply them with a photo which they print onto a bag of your choice. It takes 6 weeks to deliver, but they will ship

overseas. The shop will also print personal inscriptions onto bags. 15–17 Pont St., SW3. ✆ **020/7838-9177.** www.anyahindmarch.com. Tube: Sloane Sq. or Knightsbridge.

H&M Hennes Here are copies of hot-off-the-catwalk fashions at affordable prices. While the quality isn't anything to brag about, the prices are. For disposable cutting-edge fashion, you can't beat it. 271 Regent St., W1. ✆ **020/7493-4004.** www.hm.com. Tube: Oxford Circus.

The Library Despite its name, this is a showcase for some of the best young designers for men. It's cutting edge without dipping into the extremes of male fashion. The Library is famous for having introduced Helmut Lang to London and now features such designers as Fabrizio del Carlo and Kostas Murkudis. 268 Brompton Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7589-6569.** Tube: S. Kensington.

Paul Smith's Westbourne House This shop was converted from a stately three-story Edwardian town house into a showcase for the clothing of Paul Smith, whose well-made ready-to-wear men's (and, to a lesser extent, women's and children's) clothing defies the preconceptions of Savile Row tailors who believe that only custom-made garments will fit well. Preferred colors, with occasional exceptions, include grays, browns, and blacks, though there is a medley of velvet prints inspired by Carnaby Street in the 1960s. Look for women's clothes and accessories on the building's street level, men's clothes and accessories on the two floors above street level. 122 Kensington Park Rd., W11. ✆ **020/7727-3553.** www.paulsmith.co.uk. Tube: Notting Hill Gate or Kensington Park Rd.

Topshop ★★ This is the largest fashion store in the world. It is similar to Miss Selfridge but with better design and quality, although Topshop remains quite affordable. Its versatile and ever-changing merchandise is aimed at younger shoppers, but that doesn't stop many women in their 30s and 40s from shopping here. The outlet was the first to release a range of designs from Kate Moss. The shop, though aimed mainly at women, also has a men's floor. Women's shoes, vintage clothing, and other designer labels are sold in the basement. 216 Oxford St., W1. ✆ **020/7636-7700.** www.topshop.co.uk. Tube: Bond St.

Vivienne Westwood ★★ No one in British fashion is hotter than the unstoppable Vivienne Westwood. While it's possible to purchase some Westwood pieces around the world, her U.K. shops are the best places to find her full range of designs. The flagship location (on Conduit St.) concentrates on her couture line, known as the Gold Label. One of the U.K.'s most watched designers, Westwood

creates clothes that manage to be elegant, alluring, and stylish all at the same time. Many of the fabrics and accessories for her garments are made in Britain, and at least some of them are crafted and tailored there as well. Westwood's Anglomania line of clothing focuses on casual designs for youthful bodies, including T-shirts, jeans, and sportswear. The outlet also carries a line of clothing for men. 44 Conduit St., W1. ✆ **020/7924-4747.** Tube: Oxford Circus. Also at 430 King's Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7352-6551.** www.viviennewestwood.com. Tube: Sloane Sq.

VINTAGE & SECONDHAND

Note that there's no VAT refund on used clothing.

Annie's Vintage Clothes *Finds* This shop concentrates on carefully preserved dresses from the 1920s and 1930s but also has a range of clothing and textiles from the 1880s through the 1960s. A 1920s fully beaded dress will run you about £335 ($670), but there are scarves for £21 ($42), camisoles for £30 ($60), and a range of exceptional pieces priced between £50 and £70 ($100–$140). Clothing is located on the main floor; textiles, including old lace, bed linens, and tapestries, are upstairs. 12 Camden Passage, N1. ✆ **020/7359-0796.** Tube: Northern Line to Angel.

Pandora *Value* A London institution since the 1940s, Pandora stands in fashionable Knightsbridge, a stone's throw from Harrods. Several times a week, chauffeurs drive up with bundles packed anonymously by England's gentry. One woman voted best-dressed at the Ascot Horse Races several years ago was wearing a secondhand dress acquired here. Prices are generally one-third to half the retail value. Chanel and Anne Klein are among the designers represented. Outfits are usually no more than two seasons old. 16–22 Cheval Place, SW7. ✆ **020/7589-5289.** Tube: Knightsbridge.

GIFTS & SOUVENIRS

Asprey & Garrard This is as well-known and well-respected a name in luxury gift giving as anything you're likely to find in all of Britain, with a clientele that includes the likes of the Sultan of Brunei and Queen Elizabeth. Scattered over four floors of a dignified Victorian building, it's filled with antiques, porcelain, leather goods, crystal, clocks, and enough unusual objects of dignified elegance to stock an entire English country house. 167 New Bond St., W1. ✆ **020/7493-6767.** www.asprey.com. Tube: Green Park.

Muji An emporium for Japanese wares, this store is known for its bargain offerings. Among its merchandise, the frugal shopper will

find everything from "simple and functional chic" clothing to flatware, most of it in avant-garde, minimalist styles completely devoid of any traditional or baroque influences of Olde England. The bath soaps are a delight, coming in such unusual scents as grapefruit and mandarin orange. Funky umbrellas and a host of other ever-changing wares tempt shoppers. 157 Kensington High St., W8. ✆ **020/376-2484.** www.muji.co.uk. Tube: High St. Kensington.

HOME DESIGN, FURNISHINGS & HOUSEWARES

Also see "Jewelry" and "Art & Crafts."

The Conran Shop You'll find Sir Terence Conran's high style at reasonable prices at this outlet. The fashion press cites Conran as "the director" of British middle-class taste since the 1960s. This place is great for gifts, home furnishings, and tabletop ware—or just for gawking. Michelin House, 81 Fulham Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7589-7401.** www.conranshop.co.uk. Tube: S. Kensington.

Designers Guild After more than 3 decades in business, creative director Tricia Guild and her young designers still lead the pack in all that's bright and whimsical. They are often copied but never outdone. There's an exclusive line of handmade furniture and accessories at the nos. 267–271 location, and wallpaper and more than 2,000 fabrics at the neighboring nos. 275–277 shop. The colors remain vivid forever, and the designs are always irreverent. Also available are children's accessories, toys, crockery, and cutlery. 267–271 and 275–277 King's Rd., SW3. ✆ **020/7351-5775.** www.designers.guild.com. Tube: Sloane Sq.

JEWELRY

Asprey & Garrard Previously known as Garrard & Co., this recently merged jeweler specializes in both antique and modern jewelry, and silverware. The in-house designers also produce pieces to order and do repairs. You can have a pair of pearl earrings or silver cuff links made for £60 ($120)—but the prices go nowhere but up from there. 167 New Bond St., W1. ✆ **020/7493-6767.** www.asprey.com. Tube: Green Park.

Butler & Wilson There are other outlets for this chain, but we prefer this Mayfair location. It built its reputation on retro costume jewelry, but offers so much more. In addition to bracelets, brooches, earrings, and necklaces, it also sells jewelry for men along with handbags, accessories, and gift items. 20 S. Molton St., W1. ✆ **020/7409-2955.** Tube: Bond St.

Dinny Hall In business for 20 years, Dinny Hall likes to say that she makes jewelry to be worn—not put in the bank. For much of her

inspiration, she turns to nature itself, with many ideas originating from grasses, buds, berries, seeds, and pods. Much of her jewelry is in gold and silver with simple designs. 200 Westbourne Grove, Notting Hill, W11. ✆ **020/7792-3913.** Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

Lesley Craze Gallery/Textiles This complex has developed a reputation as a showcase of the best contemporary British jewelry and textile design. The gallery shop focuses on precious metals and includes pieces by such renowned designers as Wendy Ramshaw. Prices start at £60 ($120). The gallery also features costume jewelry in materials ranging from bronze to paper. Textiles feature contemporary designs, including wall hangings, scarves, and ties by artists such as Jo Barker, Dawn DuPree, and Victoria Richards. 33–35A Clerkenwell Green, EC1. ✆ **020/7608-0393** (jewelry), 020/7251-9200 (textiles). www.lesleycrazegallery.co.uk. Tube: Farringdon.

Sanford Brothers Ltd. In business since 1923, this family firm sells all styles of jewelry (Victorian through modern), silver, and a fine selection of clocks and watches. Old Elizabeth Houses, 3 Holborn Bars, EC1. ✆ **020/7405-2352.** www.sanfords.co.uk. Tube: Chancery Lane.

MUSEUM SHOPS

Victoria and Albert Museum Gift Shop ★★ This is the best museum shop in London—indeed, one of the best in the world. It sells cards, a fabulous selection of art books, and the usual items, along with reproductions from the design museum archives. Cromwell Rd., SW7. ✆ **020/7942-2696.** www.vandashop.com. Tube: S. Kensington.

MUSIC

Collectors should browse **Notting Hill** because there are a handful of good shops near the Notting Hill Gate Tube stop. Also browse **Soho** in the Wardour Street area, near the Tottenham Court Road Tube stop. Sometimes dealers show up at Covent Garden on the weekends.

Dress Circle This store is unique in London in that it's devoted to musical theater and standard vocalists such as Frank Sinatra or Judy Garland. After half a century, recordings in the U.K. enter the public domain—hence the lower prices on rereleased CDs of West End and Broadway musicals from the 1950s. They are priced very low, since royalties don't have to be paid. New releases, of course, cost at least three times more. Karaoke recordings, even theatrical souvenirs are sold—perhaps a Bette Davis doll as Margo Channing in *All About Eve*. 57–59 Monmouth St., WC2. ✆ **020/7907-7000.** www.dresscircle.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden.

Flashback ★ *Finds* This small, cramped store deep in the heart of Islington is devoted to golden oldies. For the music lover, especially the devotee of the hits of yesterday, it's a gem and a discovery—and one of the best places in London to spend an afternoon browsing. 50 Essex Rd., N1. ✆ **020/7354-9356.** www.flashback.co.uk. Tube: Angel.

Fopp Born in Glasgow in 1981, this outlet is the best of several locations, and it's the third-largest specialist musical retailer in the U.K. Its name Fopp comes from the title of a song by the Ohio Players. The store has earned its stripes for its markdown prices on new releases and its non-mainstream catalog of CDs, DVDs, and books. The location is on a busy corner across from the Palace Theatre. 1 Earlham St., WC1. ✆ **020/7379-0883.** www.fopp.co.uk. Tube: Covent Garden.

HMV ★★ This is the U.K.'s leading specialist retailer in music, DVD/video, computer games, and other products. The celebrated composer, Sir Edward Elgar, launched the first store in 1921. Here at this vast emporium of entertainment, you'll have the widest possible range of recorded music titles, including the latest releases, along with computer games and other temptations such as titles on both CD and vinyl. From rock to pop, from indie to R&B, from reggae to hip-hop, it's all here. Check downstairs for classical and jazz, and avail yourself of any listening post to check out the CD before buying it. 150 Oxford St., W1. ✆ **020/7631-3423.** www.hmv.co.uk. Tube: Oxford Circus.

zavvi ★ The famous Virgin Megastore has re-created itself as zavvi, one of the U.K.'s largest independent retailers. It's like a giant musical grocery store—even rock stars come here for the latest releases. Games, DVDs, and books are also sold, plus the staff is constantly expanding its range of Blu-Ray titles. T-shirts, posters, and iPods also tempt you. 14-16 Oxford St., W1. ✆ **020/7631-1234.** Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

SHOES

Natural Shoe Store A range of shoes for men and women is stocked in this shop, which also does repairs. The selection includes all comfort and quality footwear, from Birkenstock to the British classics. 21 Neal St., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-5254.** www.thenaturalshoestore.com. Tube: Covent Garden.

Office In spite of its dull name, this is an excellent store for style-setters on a budget. Its imitations of some of the world's leading shoe designers have earned it the reputation of being the "Madame Tussaud's of footwear." All the fashionable shoe designers, from Kenneth

Cole to Patrick Cox, get ripped off here. 107 Queensway, W2. ✆ **020/7792-4000.** www.office.co.uk. Tube: Queensway or Bayswater.

Shelly's Shelly's flagship on Oxford Circus is the largest shoe store in London, selling footwear to fashionable young things and style-conscious individuals at affordable prices. 266–270 Regent St., W1. ✆ **020/7287-0927.** www.shellys.co.uk. Tube: Oxford Circus or King's Rd. Other locations throughout London.

TEA

Of course, don't forget to visit **Fortnum & Mason** for tea as well (see "The Department Stores," earlier).

The Tea House This shop sells everything associated with tea, tea drinking, and teatime. It boasts more than 70 quality teas and tisanes, including whole-fruit blends, the best tea of China (Gunpowder, and jasmine with flowers), India (Assam leaf, and choice Darjeeling), Japan (Genmaicha green), and Sri Lanka (pure Ceylon), plus such longtime-favorite English blended teas as Earl Grey. The shop also offers novelty teapots and mugs. 15A Neal St., WC2. ✆ **020/7240-7539.** Tube: Covent Garden.

TOYS

Hamleys This flagship is the finest toyshop in the world—more than 35,000 toys and games on seven floors of fun and magic. The huge selection includes soft, cuddly stuffed animals as well as dolls, radio-controlled cars, train sets, model kits, board games, outdoor toys, computer games, and more. 188–196 Regent St., W1. ✆ **0800/2802-444.** www.hamleys.com. Tube: Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus. Also at Covent Garden and Heathrow Airport.

4 Street & Flea Markets

If Mayfair stores are not your cup of tea, don't worry; you'll have more fun, and find a better bargain, at any of the city's street and flea markets.

THE WEST END **Covent Garden Market** ★ (✆ **020/7836-9136;** www.coventgardenmarket.com; Tube: Covent Garden), the most famous market in all of England, offers several markets Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm. (We think it's most fun to come on Sun 11am–6pm.) It can be a little confusing until you dive in and explore. **Apple Market** is the bustling market in the courtyard, where traders sell—well, everything. Many of the items are what the English call collectible nostalgia: a wide array of glassware and

ceramics, leather goods, toys, clothes, hats, and jewelry. Some of the merchandise is truly unusual. Many items are handmade, with some of the craftspeople selling their own wares—except on Monday, when antiques dealers take over. Some goods are new, some are very old. Out back is **Jubilee Market** (✆ **020/7836-2139**), also an antiques market on Monday. Tuesday to Sunday, it's sort of a fancy hippie market with cheap clothes and books. Out front there are a few tents of cheap stuff, except on Monday.

The indoor market section of Covent Garden Market (in a superbly restored hall) is one of the best shopping venues in London. Specialty shops sell fashions and herbs, gifts and toys, books and dollhouses, cigars, and much more. There are bookshops and branches of famous stores (Hamleys, the Body Shop), and prices are kept moderate.

St. Martin–in-the-Fields Market (Tube: Charing Cross) is good for teens and hipsters who don't want to trek all the way to Camden Market and are interested in imports from India and South America, crafts, and local football (soccer) souvenirs. It's located near Trafalgar Square and Covent Garden; hours are Monday through Saturday from 11am to 5pm and Sunday from noon to 5pm.

Berwick Street Market (Tube: Oxford Circus or Tottenham Court Rd.) may be the only street market in the world that's flanked by rows of strip clubs, porno stores, and adult-movie dens. Don't let that put you off. Humming 6 days a week in the scarlet heart of Soho, this array of stalls and booths sells the best and cheapest fruit and vegetables in town. It also hawks ancient records, tapes, books, and old magazines, any of which may turn out to be a collector's item one day. It's open Monday to Saturday 8am to 5:30pm.

On Sunday mornings artists hang their work on the railings along a 1.5km (1 mile) stretch of **Bayswater Road,** along the edge of Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens. If the weather's right, start at Marble Arch and walk. You'll see the same thing on the railings of Green Park along Piccadilly on Saturday afternoons.

NOTTING HILL **Portobello Market** (Tube: Notting Hill Gate) is a magnet for collectors of virtually everything. It's mainly a Saturday happening, from 6am to 5pm. You needn't be here at the crack of dawn; 9am is fine. Once known mainly for fruit and vegetables (still sold here throughout the week), in the past 4 decades Portobello has become synonymous with antiques. But don't take the stallholder's word for it that the fiddle he's holding is a genuine Stradivarius left to him by his Italian great-uncle; it might just as well have been "nicked" from an East End pawnshop.

The market is divided into three major sections. The most crowded is the antiques section, running between Colville Road and Chepstow Villas to the south. (***Warning:*** There's a great concentration of pickpockets in this area.) The second section (and the oldest part) is the "fruit and veg" market, lying between Westway and Colville Road. In the third and final section is a flea market, where Londoners sell bric-a-brac and lots of secondhand goods they didn't really want in the first place. But looking around still makes for interesting fun.

Note: Some 90 antiques and art shops along Portobello Road are open during the week when the street market is closed. This is actually a better time for the serious collector to shop because you'll get more attention from dealers, and you won't be distracted by the organ grinder.

6 London After Dark

From the fringes of the East End to the bowels of West Brompton and beyond, London pulsates with more nightlife than any other capital of Europe. Bette Midler once said that when it's three o'clock in the morning in New York, it's 1938 in London. But she said that a long time ago. Times have changed. London is an all-night party town.

The draconian liquor laws of yesterday have been relaxed a bit. Even if your favorite pub closes at 11pm, there are still bars and late-night joints awaiting your business. Bars, in fact, are no longer places to drop in for a drink, but often an all-night venue unto themselves. Many bars are attached to fashionable restaurants with dinner menus, dance floors, and even DJs, so they are looking more and more like nightclubs.

There is such diversity here: a night at the theater, a supper club, a dance club, a fashionable bar, an old-fashioned pub with literary associations, an evening at a Covent Garden opera or the Royal Ballet, a classical music concert at Albert Hall, an intimate jazz club, even a first-run movie or a gay time at a cruisy bar. You name it: London has it.

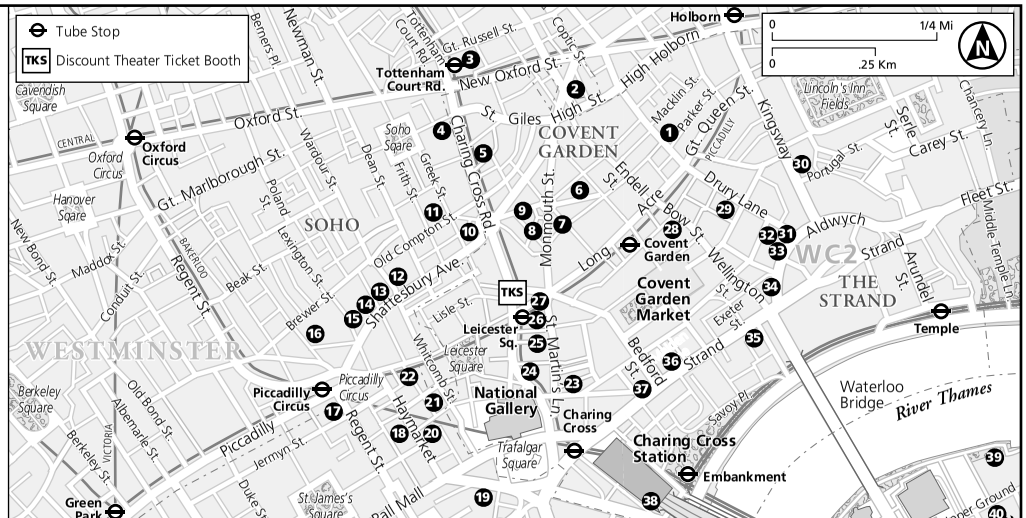
The Tube may shut down early but there are always night buses to get you back to your hotel. Taxis are available 24 hours but are expensive.

Weekly publications such as *Time Out* carry full entertainment listings, including data on restaurants, nightclubs, and bars. You'll also find listings in daily newspapers, notably the *Times* and the *Telegraph.*

1 The Play's the Thing: London's Theater Scene

GETTING TICKETS

To see specific shows, especially hits, purchase your tickets in advance. The best method is to buy your tickets from the theater's box office, which you can do over the phone using a credit card. You'll pay the theater price and pick up the tickets the day of the show. You can also go to a ticket agent, especially for discount tickets such as those sold



Adelphi **37**
Albery **27**
Aldwych **31**
Almeida **32**
Ambassadors **9**
Apollo **14**
Astoria **4**
Cambridge **7**
Coliseum **23**
Comedy **21**
Cottesloe **39**
Criterion **17**
Dominion **3**
Donmar Warehouse **6**
Duchess **34**
Duke of York **25**
Fortune **29**
Garrick **24**
Gielgud **13**
Her Majesty's **18**
Lyric **15**
Lyttleton **39**
New London **1**
Old Vic **40**
Olivier **39**
Palace **10**
Peacock **30**
Phoenix **5**
Piccadilly **16**
Playhouse **38**
Prince Edward **11**
Prince of Wales **22**
Queen's **12**
Royal National Theatre **39**
Royal Opera House **28**
Savoy **35**
Shaftesbury **2**
St. Martins **8**
Strand **33**
Theatre Royal Haymarket **20**
Vaudeville **36**
Whitehall **19**
Wyndhams **26**
Young Vic **40**

Central London Theaters

by the **Society of London Theatre** (✆ **020/7557-6700;** www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk) on the southwest corner of Leicester Square, open Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm and Sunday noon to 3pm. A £2 ($4) service fee is charged. You can purchase all tickets here, although the booth specializes in half-price sales for shows that are undersold. These tickets must be purchased in person—not over the phone. For phone orders, you have to call **Ticketmaster** at ✆ **0870/060-2340.**

For tickets and information before you go, try **Keith Prowse,** 234 W. 44th St., Ste. 1000, New York, NY 10036 (✆ **800/669-8687** or 212/398-1468; www.keithprowse.com). Their London office (which operates under the name of both Global Tickets and First Call Tickets) is at the British Visitor Center, 1 Regent St., SW1 Y4XT (✆ **0870/906-3860**). They'll mail your tickets, fax a confirmation, or leave your tickets at the appropriate production's box office. Instant confirmations are immediately available for most shows. A booking and handling fee of up to 20% is added to the price of all tickets.

Applause Theatre and Entertainment Service, 311 W. 43rd St., Ste. 601, New York, NY 10036 (✆ **800/451-9930** or 212/307-7050; fax 212/397-3729; www.applause-tickets.com), can sometimes get you tickets when Prowse can't. In business for some 2 decades, it is a reliable and efficient company.

Another option is **Theatre Direct International** (**TDI; ✆ 800/BROADWAY** [2762-3929] or 212/541-8457 in the U.S. only; www.broadway.com). TDI specializes in providing London fringe theater tickets but also has tickets to major productions, including those at the Royal National Theatre and the Barbican. The service allows you to arrive in London with your tickets or have them held for you at the box office.

If you're staying at a first-class or deluxe hotel with a concierge, you can also call and arrange tickets before you arrive, putting them on a credit card.

Many of the major theaters offer reduced-price tickets to students on a standby basis but not to the general public. When available, these tickets are sold 30 minutes prior to curtain. Line up early for popular shows, as standby tickets go fast and furious. Of course, you must have a valid student ID.

MAJOR THEATERS & COMPANIES

We have listed some of the most popular theaters and companies below. To find out what's on currently in all of the major and fringe

theaters, pick up *Time Out London, Where,* a London daily newspaper, or "The Official London Theatre Guide" pamphlet (online at www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk), available at ticket brokers and all West End theaters.

One of the world's finest theater companies, the **Royal Shakespeare Company** ★★★, performs at various theaters throughout London. Check its website at **www.rsc.org.uk** for current shows and venues or call ✆ **0844/800-1110** Monday to Saturday 9am to 8pm. The theater troupe performs in London during the winter months, specializing in the plays of the Bard. In summer, it tours England and abroad.

Cadogan Hall Nestled in the heart of Chelsea, this decommissioned church, the first Christian Science church in the world, founded in 1893, has been turned into a concert hall for the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. Completely restored and massively altered, the building now boasts a 900-seat auditorium and all the acoustics of the 21st century. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 7pm and Sunday from 10am to 7pm performance days only. 5 Sloane Terrace, SW1. ✆ **020/7730-4500.** www.cadoganhall.com. Tickets vary according to the event. Tube: Sloane Sq.

Open-Air Theatre This outdoor theater is in Regent's Park; the setting is idyllic, and both seating and acoustics are excellent. Presentations are mainly of Shakespeare, usually in period costume. Its theater bar, the longest in London, serves both drink and food. In the case of a rained-out performance, tickets are offered for another date. The season runs from June to mid-September, Monday to Saturday at 8pm, plus Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday matinees at 2:30pm. Inner Circle, Regent's Park, NW1. ✆ **020/7935-5756.** www.openairtheatre.org. Tickets £10–£33 ($20–$66). Tube: Baker St.

Royal Court Theatre This theater has always been a leader in producing provocative, cutting-edge, new drama. In the 1950s, it staged the plays of the angry young men, notably John Osborne's then-sensational *Look Back in Anger;* earlier it debuted the plays of George Bernard Shaw. The theater is home to the English Stage Company, formed to promote serious stage writing. Box office hours are Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. Sloane Sq., SW1. ✆ **020/7565-5000.** www.royalcourttheatre.com. Tickets £10–£25 ($20–$50); call for the latest information. Tube: Sloane Sq.

Royal National Theatre Home to one of the world's greatest stage companies, the Royal National Theatre is not one but three theaters—the Olivier, reminiscent of a Greek amphitheater with its

open stage; the more traditional Lyttelton; and the Cottesloe, with its flexible stage and seating. The National presents the finest in world theater, from classic drama to award-winning new plays, including comedies, musicals, and shows for young people. A choice of at least six plays is offered at any one time.

It's also a full-time theater center, with an amazing selection of bars, cafes, restaurants, free foyer music and exhibitions, short early-evening performances, bookshops, backstage tours, riverside walks, and terraces. You can have a three-course meal in Mezzanine, the National's restaurant; enjoy a light meal in the brasserie-style Terrace cafe; or have a snack in one of the coffee bars. Box office hours are Monday to Saturday 10am to 8pm. South Bank, SE1. ✆ **020/7452-3000.** www.nationaltheatre.org.uk. Tickets £10–£38 ($20–$76); midweek matinees, Sat matinees, and previews cost less. Tube: Waterloo, Embankment, or Charing Cross.

Shakespeare's Globe Theatre In May 1997, the new Globe Theatre—a replica of the Elizabethan original, thatched roof and all—staged its first slate of plays (*Henry V* and *A Winter's Tale*) yards away from the site of the 16th-century theater where the Bard originally staged his work.

Productions vary in style and setting; not all are performed in Elizabethan costume. In keeping with the historic setting, no lighting is focused just on the stage, but floodlighting is used during evening performances to replicate daylight in the theater—Elizabethan performances took place in the afternoon. Theatergoers sit on wooden benches of yore—in thatch-roofed galleries, no less—but these days you can rent a cushion to make yourself more comfortable. About 500 "groundlings" can stand in the uncovered yard around the stage, just as they did when the Bard was here.

From May to September, the company intends to hold performances Tuesday to Saturday at 2 and 7pm. There will be a limited winter schedule. In any season, the schedule may be affected by weather because this is an outdoor theater. Performances last 2½ to 4 hours, depending on the play.

For details on the exhibition that tells the story of the painstaking re-creation of the Globe, as well as guided tours of the theater, see p. 140. New Globe Walk, Bankside, SE1. ✆ **020/7902-1400** for box office. www.shakespeares-globe.org. Tickets £5 ($10) for groundlings, £15–£32 ($30–$64) for gallery seats; exhibition tickets £9 ($18) adults, £7.50 ($15) seniors and students, £6.50 ($13) ages 5–15. Tube: Mansion House or Blackfriars.

FRINGE THEATER

Some of the best theater in London is performed on the "fringe"—at the dozens of theaters devoted to alternative plays, revivals, contemporary dramas, and musicals. These shows are usually more adventurous than established West End productions, and they're cheaper. Most offer discounted seats to students and seniors. Fringe theaters are scattered around London, so check listings in *Time Out* and www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk and www.londontheatre.co.uk.

Almeida Theatre The Almeida is known for its adventurous stagings of new and classic plays. The theater's legendary status is validated by consistently good productions at lower-than-average prices. Performances are usually held Monday to Saturday. The Almeida is also home to the Festival of Contemporary Music (also called the Almeida Opera) from mid-June to mid-July, featuring everything from atonal jazz to 12-tone chamber orchestra pieces. Box office is open Monday through Saturday 10am to 6pm. Almeida St., N1. ✆ **020/7359-4404.** www.almeida.co.uk. Tickets £6–£30 ($12–$60). Tube: Northern Line to Angel or Victoria Line to Highbury & Islington.

Young Vic Long known for presenting both classical and modern plays, the famous theater company is back at its home base following a 2-year restoration. The acoustics, the seating, and the stage equipment are better than ever. The Young Vic nurtures younger talent than its sister theater, **Old Vic** (www.oldvictheatre.com), which puts on productions by more established artists. Productions at the Young Vic could be almost anything and are priced depending on the show. Prices are usually £7.50 and £25 ($15 and $50), and note that discounted tickets are available for students and others 26 and under. The box office is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 7pm. 66 The Cut, SE1 ✆ **0870/060-6628.** www.youngvic.org. Tube: Oval.

2 Classical Music, Dance & Opera

THE REST OF THE PERFORMING ARTS SCENE

Currently, London supports five major orchestras—the **London Symphony,** the **Royal Philharmonic,** the **Philharmonia Orchestra,** the **BBC Symphony,** and the **BBC Philharmonic**—several choirs, and many smaller chamber groups and historic instrument ensembles. Look for the **London Sinfonietta,** the **English Chamber Orchestra,** and of course, the **Academy of St. Martin–in-the-Fields.** Performances are in the South Banks Arts Centre and the Barbican. Smaller recitals are at Wigmore Hall and St. John's Smith Square.

Barbican Centre (home of the London Symphony Orchestra & more) The largest art and exhibition center in western Europe, the roomy and comfortable Barbican complex is the perfect setting for enjoying music and theater. Barbican Hall is the home address of the London Symphony Orchestra, as well as host to visiting orchestras and performers of all styles, from classical to jazz, folk, and world music.

In addition to its hall and two theaters, Barbican Centre encompasses the Barbican Art Gallery, the Curve Gallery, and foyer exhibition spaces; Cinemas One and Two, which show recently released mainstream films and film series; the Barbican Library, a general lending library that places a strong emphasis on the arts; the Conservatory, one of London's largest greenhouses; and restaurants, cafes, and bars. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 8pm. Silk St., EC2. ✆ **020/7638-8891.** www.barbican.org.uk. Tickets depend on the event. Tube: Barbican or Moorgate.

London Coliseum (home of the English National Opera) Built in 1904 as a variety theater and converted into an opera house in 1968, the London Coliseum is the city's largest theater. For its 100th birthday, the renowned opera house received a $75-million restoration fit for a diva. Today not only is the Edwardian splendor restored, but there also are roomier foyers, plus a two-story lobby and bar with views of Trafalgar Square. The 2,358-seat Coliseum still remains the largest proscenium theater in England. The English National Opera performs a range of works here, from classics to Gilbert and Sullivan to new experimental works. All performances are in English. The Opera presents a repertory of 18 to 20 productions 5 or 6 nights a week for 10 months of the year (the theater is dark mid-July to mid-Sept). Although balcony seats are cheaper, many visitors seem to prefer the upper circle or dress circle. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 6pm. London Coliseum, St. Martin's Lane, WC2. ✆ **0870/145-0200.** www.eno.org. Tickets from £10 ($20) balcony, £26–£81 ($52–$162) upper or dress circle or stalls; about 100 discount balcony tickets sold on the day of performance from 10am. Tube: Charing Cross or Leicester Sq.

Royal Albert Hall Opened in 1871 and dedicated to the memory of Victoria's consort, Prince Albert, this circular building holds one of the world's most famous auditoriums. With a seating capacity of 5,200, it's a popular place to hear music by stars. Occasional sporting events (especially boxing) figure strongly here, too.

Since 1941, the hall has hosted the BBC Henry Wood Promenade Concerts, known as "The Proms," an annual series that lasts for 8 weeks between mid-July and mid-September. The Proms, incorporating a medley of rousing, mostly British orchestral music, have been a British tradition since 1895. Although most of the audience occupies reserved seats, true aficionados usually opt for standing room in the orchestra pit, with close-up views of the musicians on stage. The final evening is the most traditional; the rousing favorites "Jerusalem" or "Land of Hope and Glory" echo through the hall. After its 8-year restoration, the Albert Hall now allows tours every 30 minutes, starting at 10:30am Friday to Tuesday and ending at 2:30pm, at a cost of £7.50 ($15). Limited to only 15 participants, tours take in such sights as the Queen's Box and the Royal Retiring Room used by royals during intermission, and the Royal Albert Hall organ with it 9,999 pipes. The box office is open daily 9am to 9pm. Kensington Gore, SW7 2AP. ✆ **020/7589-8212.** www.royalalberthall.com. Tickets £5–£150 ($10–$300), depending on the event. Tube: South Kensington.

Royal Festival Hall Three of the most acoustically perfect concert halls in the world were erected here between 1951 and 1964: the Royal Festival Hall, the Queen Elizabeth Hall, and the Purcell Room, all located in this complex. Together, the halls present more than 1,200 performances a year, including classical music, ballet, jazz, popular music, and contemporary dance. Also here is the internationally renowned Hayward Gallery.

Royal Festival Hall, which usually opens daily at 10am, offers an extensive array of things to see and do, including free exhibitions in the foyers and occasional free lunchtime music at 12:30pm. On Friday, Commuter Jazz in the foyer from 5:15 to 6:45pm is free. The Poetry Library is open Tuesday to Sunday 11am to 8pm, and shops display a selection of books, records, and crafts. Food and drink are also served at various venues. The box office is open daily from 9am to 8pm. On the South Bank, SE1. Box office ✆ **08703/800400.** www.rfh.org.uk. Tickets £8–£60 ($16–$120). Tube: Waterloo or Embankment.

The Royal Opera House (home of the Royal Ballet & the Royal Opera) The Royal Ballet and the Royal Opera are at home again in this magnificently restored theater. Opera and ballet aficionados hardly recognize the renovated place, with its spectacular public spaces, including the Floral Hall (a chamber-music venue), a rooftop restaurant, and bars and shops. The entire northeast corner of one of London's most famous public squares has been transformed, finally realizing Inigo Jones's original vision for this colonnaded plaza.

Performances of the Royal Opera are usually sung in the original language, but supertitles are projected. The Royal Ballet, which ranks with top companies such as the Kirov and the Paris Opera Ballet, performs a repertory with a tilt toward the classics, including works by its earlier choreographer-directors Sir Frederick Ashton and Sir Kenneth MacMillan. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 10am to 8pm. Bow St., Covent Garden, WC2. ✆ **0871/663-2587.** www.royalopera.org. Tickets £6–£185 ($12–$370). Tube: Covent Garden.

Sadler's Wells Theatre This is a premier venue for dance and opera. It occupies the site of a series of theaters, the first built in 1683. In the early 1990s, the turn-of-the-20th-century theater was mostly demolished, and construction began on an innovative new design completed at the end of 1998. The turn-of-the-20th-century facade has been retained, but the interior has been completely revamped with a stylish cutting-edge theater design. The new theater offers classical ballet, modern dance of all degrees of "avant-gardeness," and children's theatrical productions, including a Christmas ballet. Performances are usually at 7:30pm. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 9am to 8:30pm. Rosebery Ave., EC1. ✆ **020/7863-8096.** www.sadlers-wells.com. Tickets £10–£50 ($20–$100). Tube: Northern Line to Angel.

OUTSIDE CENTRAL LONDON

Kenwood Lakeside Concerts These band and orchestral concerts on the north side of Hampstead Heath have been a British tradition for more than half a century. In recent years, laser shows and fireworks have been added to a repertoire that includes everything from rousing versions of the *1812 Overture* to jazz to operas such as *Carmen.* The final concert of the season always features some of the "Pomp and Circumstance" marches of Sir Edward Elgar. Music drifts across the lake to serenade wine-and-cheese parties on the grass. Concerts take place in July and August, Saturday at 7:30pm. The box office is open Monday to Saturday from 9:30am to 6:30pm. Kenwood, Hampstead Lane, Hampstead Heath, London NW3 7JR. ✆ **0870/890-0146.** www.picnicconcerts.com. Tickets cost £23 ($46) for seats on the lawn, £30 ($60) for reserved deck chairs. Discounts of 12.5% for students and persons 61 and older. Tube: Northern Line to Golders Green or Archway, then bus no. 210, a 30–45-min. jaunt to the north of London.

3 The Club & Music Scene

LIVE MUSIC

Sound In the heart of London, this 700-seat venue has booked the big acts, everybody from Sinéad O'Connor to the Spice Girls.

Sound functions as a restaurant and bar every night, with limited live music and a DJ until 11pm; after 11pm, the mood changes, the menu is simplified to include only bar snacks, and the site focuses on live music and dancing. The music program is forever changing; call to see what's on at the time of your visit and to reserve tickets. Crowds and age levels can vary here depending on what act is featured. Reservations are recommended for dinner, but reservations after 11pm are not accepted. The box office is open Monday to Saturday 10am to 6pm. 1 Leicester Sq., W1. ✆ **020/7287-1010.** www.soundlondon.com. Prices free until 9pm; £8 ($16) 9–10pm, £10–£12 ($20–$24) 10–11pm, £15 ($30) from 11pm. Tube: Leicester Sq.

TRADITIONAL ENGLISH MUSIC

Cecil Sharpe House CSH was the focal point of the folk revival in the 1960s, and it continues to treasure and nurture folk music and dance. You'll find a whole range of traditional music and dance here, with different evenings devoted to, among others, Irish set dances, English barn dances (similar to American square dances), dances from Louisiana's Cajun country, even reenactment of 18th-century quadrilles. Although many of the regular patrons of this bar and dance club know these arcane dances by heart, they're usually charitable toward quick-learning and agile newcomers who can pick up the steps and the beat quickly. The box office is open Monday to Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm. 2 Regent's Park Rd., NW1. ✆ **020/7485-2206.** Tickets £5–£15 ($10–$30). Tube: Northern Line to Camden Town.

JAZZ & BLUES

Ain't Nothin' But Blues Bar This club, which bills itself as the only true blues venue in town, features local acts and occasional touring American bands. On weekends, prepare to wait in line for a while. Open Monday to Wednesday 6pm to 1am, Thursday 6pm to 2am, Friday 6pm to 3am, Saturday 2pm to 3am, and Sunday 3pm to midnight. 20 Kingly St., W1. ✆ **020/7287-0514.** www.aintnothinbut.co.uk. Cover £5 ($10). Free Sun–Wed, free Thurs before 9:30pm, free Fri–Sat before 8:30pm. Tube: Oxford Circus or Piccadilly Circus. From the Oxford Circus Tube stop, walk south on Regent St., turn left on Great Marlborough St., and then make a quick right on Kingly St.

Bull's Head This club has showcased live modern jazz every night of the week for more than 40 years. One of the oldest hostelries in the area, it was a 19th-century staging post where travelers on their way to Hampton Court could rest while coach horses were changed. Today the bar features jazz by musicians from all over the world.

Since it's way off the tourist trail, it attracts mainly locals in a wide age group, all of whom appreciate good music. Live jazz plays on Sunday from 1 to 3pm and 8:30 to 10:30pm; Monday to Saturday from 8:30 to 11pm. You can order lunch in the pub or dinner in Nuay's Thai Bistro. The club is open Monday to Saturday from noon to midnight, and Sunday from noon to 10:30pm. 373 Lonsdale Rd., Barnes, SW13. ✆ **020/8876-5241.** www.thebullshead.com. Cover £6–£15 ($12–$30). Tube: Hammersmith, then bus no. 209 to Barnes Bridge, then retrace the path of the bus for some 91m (298 ft.) on foot; or take Weybridge train from Waterloo Station and get off at Barnes Bridge Station, then walk 5 min. to the club.

100 Club Although less plush and expensive than some jazz clubs, 100 Club is a serious contender on the music front, with presentations of some remarkably good jazz. Its cavalcade of bands includes the best British jazz musicians and some of their Yankee brethren. Rock, R&B, and blues are also on tap. Serious devotees of jazz from ages 20 to 45 show up here. Open Monday to Thursday and Sunday 7:30 to 11:30pm; Friday noon to 3pm and 8:30pm to 2am; and Saturday 7:30pm to 1am. ***Note:*** These hours are subject to change. 100 Oxford St., W1. ✆ **020/7636-0933.** www.the100club.co.uk. Cover £7–£13 ($14–$26). Club members get a £1 ($2) discount on Sat nights. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd. or Oxford Circus.

Pizza Express Don't let the name fool you: This restaurant/bar serves some of the best jazz in London by mainstream artists, along with thin-crust Italian pizza. You'll find local bands or visiting groups, often from the United States. The place draws an equal mix of Londoners and visitors in the 20s-to-40s age bracket. Although the club has been enlarged, it's still important to reserve ahead of time. The restaurant is open daily from 11:30am to midnight; jazz plays from 7:30 to 11pm. 10 Dean St., W1. ✆ **020/7734-3220.** www.pizzaexpresslive.com. Cover £15–£22 ($30–$44). Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club Inquire about jazz in London, and people immediately think of Ronnie Scott's, the European vanguard for modern jazz. Only the best English and American combos, often fronted by top-notch vocalists, are booked here. In the heart of Soho, Ronnie Scott's is a 10-minute walk from Piccadilly Circus along Shaftesbury Avenue. In the Main Room, you can watch the show from the bar or sit at a table, where you can order dinner. The Downstairs Bar is more intimate; among the regulars at your elbow may be some of the world's most talented musicians. The club is open Monday to Saturday 6pm to 3am; Sunday 6pm to midnight.

Reservations are recommended. 47 Frith St., W1. ✆ **020/7439-0747.** www.ronniescotts.co.uk. Cover nonmembers £26 ($52); members 10% off. Tube: Leicester Sq. or Piccadilly Circus.

606 Club Located in a discreet basement in Chelsea, the 606, a jazz supper club in the boondocks of Fulham, presents live music nightly. Predominantly a venue for modern jazz, styles range from traditional to contemporary. Local musicians and some very big names play here, whether at planned gigs or informal jam sessions after they finish shows elsewhere in town. Because of license requirements, patrons can order alcohol only with food. Locals show up here along with a trendy crowd from more posh neighborhoods in London. Open Monday to Wednesday 7:30pm to 1am; Thursday to Saturday 8pm to 1:30am; selected Sundays noon to 4pm and 8pm to midnight. 90 Lots Rd., SW10. ✆ **020/7352-5953.** www.606club.co.uk. Cover Mon–Thurs £8 ($16), Fri–Sat £12 ($24), Sun lunch £8 ($16), Sun night £10 ($20). Bus: 11, 19, 22, 31, 39, C1, or C3. Tube: Earl's Court.

4 Dance, Disco & Eclectic

Cargo This watering hole in ultratrendy Hoxton draws a smart urban crowd from their expensive West End flats. Its habitués assure us it's the place to go for a "wicked time" and great live bands. If there are no bands on a particular night, then great DJs dominate the club. Music and dancing start at 6pm and the joint is jumping by 9:30pm nightly. It's fun and funky, with two big arched rooms, fantastic acoustics, and a parade of videos. As for the patrons, the bartender characterized it just right: "We get the freaks and the normal people." Drinks are reasonably priced, as is the self-styled "street food." Open Monday to Thursday noon to 1am, Friday noon to 3am, Saturday 6pm to 3am, and Sunday 1pm to midnight. Kingsland Viaduct, 83 Rivington St., Shoreditch, EC2. ✆ **020/7739-3440.** www.cargo-london.com. Cover £8–£13 ($16–$26) after 10pm. Tube: Liverpool St.

The Cross In the backwaters of King's Cross, this club has been hot since 1993. Hipsters come here for private parties thrown by Rough Trade Records or Red Or Dead, or to dance in the space's industrial-looking brick-lined vaults. Music runs the gamut from acid rock to Caribbean/African fusion to Jamaican soca. This place is shadowy, sweaty, raunchy, and sometimes down-and-dirty. Call to find out who's performing. Open Friday and Saturday from 10pm to 6am. The Arches, King's Cross Goods Yard, York Way, N1. ✆ **0845/371-4489.** www.thecross.co.uk. Cover £10–£20 ($20–$40). Tube: King's Cross.

Egg There's a wild party going on here for serious clubbers drawn to the somewhat seedy location across from King's Cross. Spread over three floors, the joint is warehouse style, with music that embraces everything from electro-disco beats to house (its specialty). Egg is a leading contender in London's underground scene, complete with a large garden and balcony terrace. Sexy clubbers—both gay and straight—show up for such events as "Playtime" on Friday nights. Open Friday from 10pm to 6am, Saturday from 10pm to noon Sunday. 200 York Way, N7. ✆ **020/7609-8364.** www.egglondon.net. Tube: King's Cross.

Fabric While other competitors have come and gone, Fabric continues to draw crowds. Its main allure is that it has a license for 24-hour music and dancing from Thursday to Sunday night. This is one of the most famous clubs in the increasingly trendy East London sector. It is said that when the owners power up the underfoot subwoofer, lights dim in London's East End. On some crazed nights, at least 2,500 members of young London, plus a medley of international visitors, crowd into this mammoth place. It has a trio of dance floors, bars wherever you look, unisex toilets, chill-out beds, and even a roof terrace. Live acts are presented every Friday, with DJs reigning on weekends. You'll hear house, garage, reggae, and whatever else is on the cutting edge of London's underground music scene. Open Thursday and Friday 9:30pm to 5am, Saturday 10pm to 7am. 77A Charterhouse St., EC1. ✆ **020/7336-8898.** www.fabriclondon.com. Cover £12–£16 ($24–$32). Tube: Farringdon.

Ministry of Sound Removed from the city center, this club-of-the-hour remains hot, hot, hot. With a large bar and huge sound system, it blasts garage and house music for the energetic crowds that pack the two dance floors. If music and lights in the rest of the club have gone to your head, you can chill in the lounge. ***Note:*** The cover charge is stiff, and bouncers decide who is cool enough to enter, so slip into your grooviest and most glamorous club gear. Open Friday 10pm to 5am and Saturday 11pm to 7am. Student night is Tuesday 10pm to 4am. 103 Gaunt St., SE1. ✆ **440/870-060-0010.** www.ministryofsound.com. Cover £12–£20 ($24–$40). Tube: Northern Line to Elephant & Castle.

Notting Hill Arts Club This is one of the hippest nighttime venues in London, with the action taking place in a no-frills basement in increasingly fashionable Notting Hill Gate. One habitué called it "the coolest nightclub on earth." To justify the name of the club, art exhibitions are sometimes staged here. Most of the clients are

younger than 35, and they come from a wide range of backgrounds—from Madonna to Ziggy Marley wannabes. The music is eclectic, varying from night to night—jazz, salsa, hip-hop, indie, and so on. Open Monday to Friday from 6pm to 2am, Saturday 4pm to 2am, and Sunday 4pm to 1am. Bands perform Monday to Thursday, Saturday, and Sunday. 21 Notting Hill Gate, W11. ✆ **020/7460-4459.** www.nottinghillartsclub.com. Cover £5–£11 ($10–$22). Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

151 Down in Chelsea, pretty young things of both sexes are attracted to this basement nightclub that hosts a variety of themed nights. There's a bustling bar and a dance floor looking out onto the DJ booth. The room is surrounded by alcoves where you can sit . . . or whatever. If Prince Harry asked Paris Hilton out on a date, he might take her here, though you don't know what Paris would think of dancing to the cheesy pop music. She'd certainly quaff the champagne. 151 King's Rd., SW3. ✆ **0871/332-3202.** Cover £10 ($20). Mon–Sat 10pm–3:30am. Tube: South Kensington.

THE GAY & LESBIAN SCENE

Time Out also carries listings on gay and lesbian clubs. Another good place for finding out what's hot and hip is **Prowler Soho,** 3–7 Brewer St., Soho, W1 (✆ **020/7734-4031;** Tube: Piccadilly Circus), the largest gay lifestyle store in London. It's open until 10pm Monday to Saturday, Sunday noon to 8pm. On the Web, **www.gingerbeer.co.uk** is the best site for lesbians to find out what's going on in London, and the magazine that all bona fide lesbians read is *G3* (www.g3magazine.co.uk).

Admiral Duncan Gay men and their friends go here to drink, have a good time, and make a political statement. British tabloids shocked the world in 1999 when they reported that this pub had been bombed, with three people dying in the attack. Within 6 weeks, the pub reopened its doors. We're happy to report that the bar is better than ever, now also attracting non-gays showing their support. 54 Old Compton St., W1. ✆ **020/7437-5300.** Tube: Piccadilly Circus or Leicester Sq.

The Box Adjacent to one of Covent Garden's best-known junctions, Seven Dials, this sophisticated Mediterranean-style bar attracts all kinds of men. In the afternoon, it is primarily a restaurant, serving meal-size salads, club sandwiches, and soups. Food service ends abruptly at 5pm, after which the place reveals its core: a cheerful, popular rendezvous for London's gay and counterculture crowds. The Box considers itself a "summer bar," throwing open doors and

windows to a cluster of outdoor tables at the slightest hint of sunshine. Open Monday to Saturday 11am to 11:30pm and Sunday 11am to 11pm. 32–34 Monmouth St. (at Seven Dials), WC2. ✆ **020/7240-5828.** www.boxbar.com. Tube: Leicester Sq.

Candy Bar This is the most popular lesbian bar in London at the moment. It has an extremely mixed clientele, ranging from butch to femme and from young to old. There are a bar and a club downstairs. Design is simple, with bright colors and lots of mirrors upstairs and darker, more flirtatious decor downstairs. Men are welcome as long as a woman escorts them. Open Monday to Thursday 5 to 11:30pm, Friday and Saturday 5pm to 2am, and Sunday 5 to 11pm. 4 Carlisle St., W1. ✆ **020/7494-4041.** Cover Fri £5 ($10), Sat £6 ($12). Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

The Edge Few bars in London can rival the tolerance, humor, and sexual sophistication found here. The first two floors are done up with decorations that, like an English garden, change with the seasons. Dance music can be found on the crowded, high-energy lower floors. Three menus are featured: a funky daytime menu, a cafe menu, and a late-night menu. Dancers hit the floors starting around 7:30pm. Clientele ranges from flamboyantly gay to hetero pub-crawlers. One downside: A reader claims the bartenders water the drinks. Open Monday to Saturday noon to 1am and Sunday 2 to 11:30pm. 11 Soho Sq., W1. ✆ **0044/207-439-1313.** www.edgesoho.co.uk. Tube: Tottenham Court Rd.

Heaven This club, housed in the vaulted cellars of Charing Cross Railway Station, is a London landmark. Heaven is one of the biggest and best-established gay venues in Britain. Painted black and reminiscent of an air-raid shelter, the club is divided into at least four areas, connected by a labyrinth of catwalk stairs and hallways. Each room offers a different type of music, from hip-hop to rock. Heaven also has theme nights, which are frequented at different times by gays, lesbians, or a mostly heterosexual crowd. Thursday in particular seems open to anything, but on Saturday it's gays only. Call before you go. Open Monday 10pm to 6:30am, Wednesday 10:30pm to 3am, Friday 11pm to 6am, and Saturday 10:30pm to 5am. The Arches, Villiers, and Craven sts., WC2. ✆ **020/7930-2020.** www.heaven-london.com. Cover £12–£15 ($24–$30). Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment.

5 Bars & Cocktail Lounges

Annex 3 On the fringe of Soho and in spite of its kitschy decor, this is one of the hottest bars in London. Its decor has been compared to a

psychedelic Christmas show, but its cocktail menu is among the finest in town. Some of the concoctions are based on recipes served in the West Indies in the 1800s. Fortunately, "Millionaire Cocktail," one of the bartender's specialties, doesn't require you to be that. 6 Little Portland St., Fitzrovia, W1. ✆ **020/7631-0700.** Tube: Oxford Circus.

Cantaloupe This bustling pub and restaurant is hailed as the bar that jump-started the increasingly fashionable Shoreditch scene. Businesspeople commuting from their jobs in the City mix with East End trendoids in the early evening at what has been called a "gastro pub/preclub bar." Wooden tables and benches are found up front, although the Red Lounge is more comfortable. The urban beat is courtesy of the house DJ. The restaurant and tapas menus are first rate. 35 Charlotte Rd., Shoreditch, EC2. ✆ **020/7729-5566.** Tube: Old St.

Club Aquarium Bring your bathing suit to this club with its swimming pool and Jacuzzi. Partygoers flock here in the scantiest of clothing, the more outrageously kitsch the better. Revelers go from one bar to the other—four in all—or else chill out in the two sofa-filled living rooms. Our favorite is the funky 1970s "Carwash" area, a retro glam place, though you may prefer Crème de la Kremlin with Russian pop and funky house. Dress like a tart (male or female), and you'll fit in just fine. Open daily 10pm to 3:30am. 256 Old St., EC1. ✆ **020/7253-3558.** www.clubaquarium.co.uk. Cover £10–£15 ($20–$30). Tube: Old St.

Lab ★ Perhaps the best mixologists in London are found right in the heart of the city at this 70s kitsch-inspired cocktail bar, where bartenders will whip you up the best Feijon Flip or Red Hot Chili Pepper in town. Come here for the ultimate in intoxication, hanging out in an interior of leather and Formica spread over two floors. A thick cocktail book lies on every table; if you're in London long enough you may want to work your way through all the drinks from the classic to house specialties. In a glam, glossy setting, DJs keep the mood relaxed. Open Monday through Saturday 4pm to midnight; Sunday 4 to 10:30pm. 12 Old Compton St., W1. ✆ **020/7437-7820.** www.lab-townhouse.com. Tube: Leicester Square.

The Met Bar Very much the place to be seen, this is one of the hottest bars in London. Mix with the elite of the fashion, TV, and music worlds. A lot of American celebrities, from Demi Moore to Courtney Cox, have been seen here sipping on a martini. Despite the caliber of the clientele, the bar has managed to maintain a relaxed and unpretentious atmosphere. In the Metropolitan Hotel, 19 Old Park Lane, W1. ✆ **020/7447-1000.** Members and hotel guests only after 6pm. Tube: Hyde Park Corner.

6 The Best of London's Pubs: The World's Greatest Pub-Crawl

Dropping into the local pub for a pint of real ale or bitter is the best way to soak up the character of the different villages that make up London. You'll hear local accents and slang, and see firsthand how far removed upper-crust Kensington is from blue-collar Wapping. Catch the local gossip or football talk—and, of course, enjoy some of the finest ales, stouts, ciders, and malt whiskeys in the world.

BELGRAVIA

Grenadier Tucked away in a mews, the Grenadier is one of London's reputedly haunted pubs, the ghost here being an 18th-century British soldier. Aside from the poltergeist, the basement houses the original bar and skittles alley used by the Duke of Wellington's officers. The scarlet front door of the one-time officers' mess is guarded by a scarlet sentry box and shaded by a vine. The bar is nearly always crowded. Lunch and dinner are offered daily—even on Sunday, when it's a tradition to drink bloody marys (made from a well-guarded recipe) here. In the stalls along the side, you can order good-tasting fare based on seasonal ingredients. Well-prepared dishes include pork Grenadier, beef Wellington, and a chicken-and-Stilton roulade. Snacks such as fish and chips are available at the bar. 18 Wilton Row, SW1. ✆ **020/7235-3074.** Tube: Hyde Park Corner.

BLOOMSBURY

Museum Tavern Across the street from the British Museum, this pub (ca. 1703) retains most of its antique trappings: velvet, oak paneling, and cut glass. It lies right in the center of the University of London area and is popular with writers, publishers, and researchers from the museum. Supposedly, Karl Marx wrote while dining here. Traditional English food is served: shepherd's pie, sausages cooked in English cider, turkey-and-ham pie, ploughman's lunch, and salads. Several English ales, cold lagers, cider, Guinness, wines, and spirits are available. Food and coffee are served all day. The pub gets crowded at lunchtime. 49 Great Russell St., WC1. ✆ **020/7242-8987.** Tube: Holborn or Tottenham Court Rd.

THE CITY

Bow Wine Vaults Bow Wine Vaults has existed since long before the wine-bar craze began in the 1970s. One of the most famous in London, the bar attracts cost-conscious diners and drinkers to its vaulted cellars for such traditional fare as deep-fried Camembert, lobster ravioli, and a mixed grill, along with fish. The cocktail bar is

popular with City employees after work (weekdays 11:30am–11pm). More elegant meals, served in the street-level dining room, include Thai green mussels in curry sauce, escallop of veal Milanese garnished with pasta, and haddock Monte Carlo. Wines from around the world are available; the last time we were there, the wine of the day was a Chilean chardonnay. 10 Bow Churchyard, EC4. ✆ **020/7248-1121.** www.bowwinevaults.com. Tube: Mansion House, Bank, or St. Paul's.

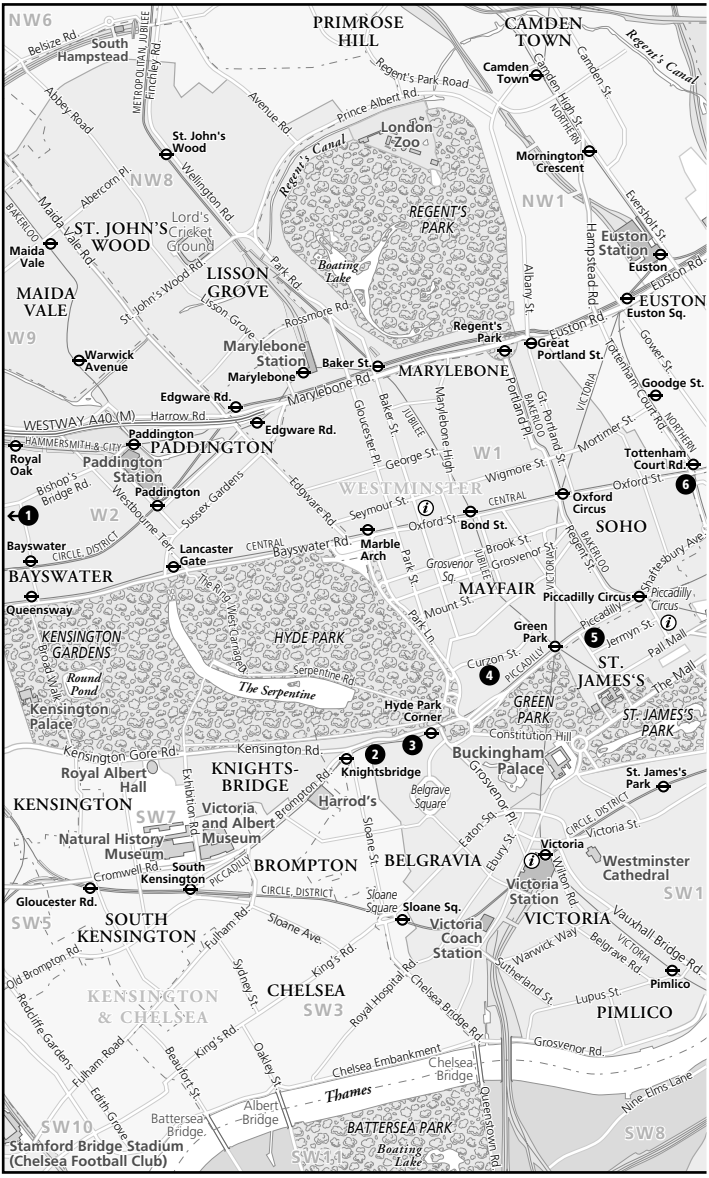
Jamaica Wine House This was one of the first coffeehouses in England and, reputedly, the Western world. For years, merchants and sea captains came here to transact deals over rum and coffee. Nowadays, the two-level house dispenses coffee, beer, ale, lager, and fine wines, among them a variety of ports. The oak-paneled bar is on the street level and attracts crowds of investment bankers. You can order standard but filling dishes such as a ploughman's lunch and toasted sandwiches. 12 St. Michael's Alley, off Cornhill, EC3. ✆ **020/7929-6972.** Tube: Bank.

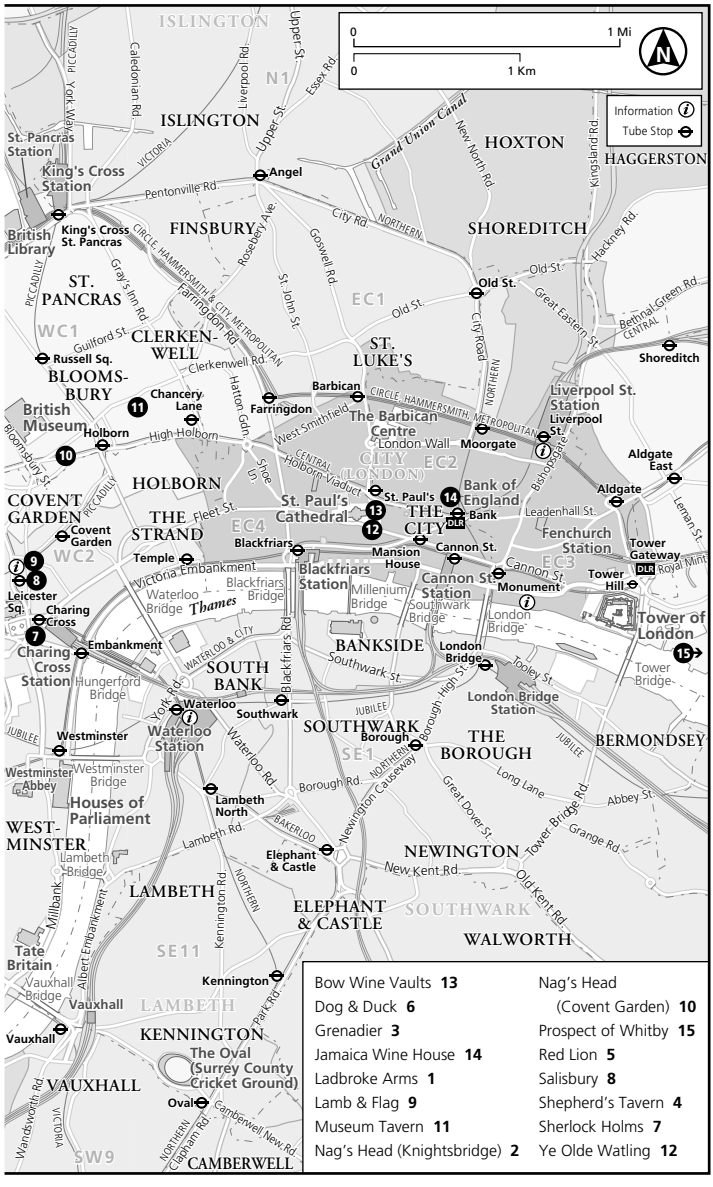
Ye Olde Watling Ye Olde Watling was rebuilt after the Great Fire of 1666. On the ground level is a mellow pub. Upstairs is an intimate restaurant where, sitting at trestle tables under oak beams, you can dine on simple English main dishes for lunch. The menu varies daily, with such choices and reliable standbys as fish and chips, lasagna, fish cakes, and usually a vegetarian dish. All are served with two vegetables or salad, plus rice or potatoes. 29 Watling St., EC4. ✆ **020/7653-9971.** Tube: Mansion House.

COVENT GARDEN

Lamb & Flag Dickens once frequented this pub, which has changed little from the days when he prowled the neighborhood. The pub has an amazing and scandalous history. Poet and author Dryden was almost killed by a band of thugs outside its doors in December 1679, and the pub gained the nickname the "Bucket of Blood" during the Regency era (1811–20) because of the bare-knuckled prizefights here. Tap beers include Courage Best and Directors, Old Speckled Hen, John Smiths, and Wadworths 6X. 33 Rose St., off Garrick St., WC2. ✆ **020/7497-9504.** Tube: Leicester Sq.

Nags Head This Nags Head is one of London's most famous Edwardian pubs. In days of yore, patrons had to make their way through a fruit-and-flower market to drink here. Today, the pub is popular with young people. The draft Guinness is very good. Lunch (served noon–4pm) is typical pub grub: sandwiches, salads, pork cooked in cider, and garlic prawns. Snacks are available all afternoon. 10 James's St., WC2. ✆ **020/7836-4678.** Tube: Covent Garden.


NW6
PRIMROSE HILL
CAMDEN TOWN
South Hampstead
Belsize Rd.
Abbey Road
METROPOLITAN, JUBILEE
Finchley Rd.
Regent's Park Road
Camden Town
Camden High St.
NORTHERN
Regent's Canal
Camden St.
Avenue Rd.
Prince Albert Rd.
London Zoo
St. John's Wood
Wellington Rd.
Regent's Canal
Mornington Crescent
Abercorn Pl.
NW8
REGENT'S PARK
NW1
Evershott St.
Maida Vale Rd.
BAKERLOO
ST. JOHN'S WOOD
Lord's Cricket Ground
Euston Station
Maida Vale
Euston
Euston Rd.
Park Rd.
Boating Lake
LISSON GROVE
Albany St.
Hampstead Rd.
MAIDA VALE
St. John's Wood Rd.
Lisson Grove
Rossmore Rd.
EUSTON
Euston Sq.
W9
Regent's Park
Great Portland St.
Gower St.
Marylebone Station
Warwick Avenue
Baker St.
MARYLEBONE
Tottenham Court Rd.
NORTHERN
Goodge St.
Marylebone
Marylebone Rd.
Edgware Rd.
Portland Pl.
BAKERLOO
Gt. Portland St.
VICTORIA
Harrow Rd.
WESTWAY A40 (M)
Edgware Rd.
Gloucester Pl.
Baker St.
JUBILEE
Marylebone High
Mortimer St.
HAMMERSMITH & CITY
Paddington
Royal Oak
PADDINGTON
George St.
W1
Tottenham Court Rd.
Paddington Station
Bishop's Bridge Rd.
Wigmore St.
Oxford St.
WESTMINSTER
Westbourne Terr.
Sussex Gardens
Edgware Rd.
Seymour St.
CENTRAL
Oxford Circus
6
1
W2
Oxford St.
Bond St.
SOHO
Bayswater
CIRCLE, DISTRICT
Lancaster Gate
CENTRAL
Bayswater Rd.
Marble Arch
Park St.
Grosvenor Sq.
Brook St.
Grosvenor St.
JUBILEE
DISTRICT
BAKERLOO
Regent St.
Shaftesbury Ave.
BAYSWATER
MAYFAIR
Piccadilly Circus
Queensway
The Ring
West Carriage Dr.
Mount St.
Park Ln.
Piccadilly
Jermyn St.
Pall Mall
KENSINGTON GARDENS
HYDE PARK
Green Park
5
Broad Walk
Round Pond
Serpentine Rd.
Curzon St.
PICCADILLY
ST. JAMES'S
The Mall
The Serpentine
4
Hyde Park Corner
GREEN PARK
ST. JAMES'S PARK
Kensington Palace
Constitution Hill
Kensington Gore Rd.
Kensington Rd.
2
3
Knightsbridge
Buckingham Palace
Royal Albert Hall
KNIGHTS-BRIDGE
Grosvenor Pl.
St. James's Park
KENSINGTON
Brompton Rd.
Harrod's
Belgrave Square
Exhibition Rd.
Victoria and Albert Museum
SW7
Natural History Museum
Sloane St.
Eaton Sq.
Ebury St.
CIRCLE, DISTRICT
Victoria St.
Victoria
Cromwell Rd.
South Kensington
PICCADILLY
BROMPTON
BELGRAVIA
Wilton Rd.
Westminster Cathedral
Gloucester Rd.
CIRCLE, DISTRICT
Sloane Square
Sloane Sq.
Victoria Station
SW1
SW5
SOUTH KENSINGTON
Fulham Rd.
Sloane Ave.
VICTORIA
Victoria Coach Station
Vauxhall Bridge Rd.
Old Brompton Rd.
King's Rd.
Warwick Way
Belgrave Rd.
VICTORIA
Sydney St.
Sutherland St.
Pimlico
Redcliffe Gardens
KENSINGTON & CHELSEA
CHELSEA
SW3
Royal Hospital Rd.
Chelsea Bridge Rd.
Lupus St.
PIMLICO
Fulham Road
King's Rd.
Beaufort St.
Oakley St.
Chelsea Embankment
Grosvenor Rd.
Chelsea Bridge
Thames
Nine Elms Lane
Albert Bridge
Battersea Bridge
Edith Grove
BATTERSEA PARK
Queenstown Rd.
SW10
SW8
Stamford Bridge Stadium (Chelsea Football Club)
Boating Lake
SW11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Information
Tube Stop
ISLINGTON
HOXTON
HAGGERSTON
FINSBURY
SHOREDITCH
ST. PANCRAS
CLERKENWELL
ST. LUKE'S
BLOOMSBURY
HOLBORN
COVENT GARDEN
THE STRAND
CITY OF LONDON
BANKSIDE
SOUTH BANK
SOUTHWARK
THE BOROUGH
BERMONDSEY
WEST-MINSTER
LAMBETH
NEWINGTON
ELEPHANT & CASTLE
WALWORTH
KENNINGTON
VAUXHALL
CAMBERWELL
St. Pancras Station
King's Cross Station
British Library
British Museum
Angel
King's Cross St. Pancras
Russell Sq.
Chancery Lane
Holborn
Farringdon
Barbican
The Barbican Centre
Moorgate
Old St.
Liverpool St. Station
Shoreditch
Aldgate East
Aldgate
Bank of England
Bank
St. Paul's
St. Paul's Cathedral
Leadenhall St.
Fenchurch Street
Tower Gateway
Tower Hill
Tower of London
Tower Bridge
Covent Garden
Temple
Blackfriars
Mansion House
Cannon St.
Cannon St. Station
Monument
Blackfriars Station
Millenium Bridge
Southwark Bridge
London Bridge
London Bridge Station
Leicester Sq.
Charing Cross
Embankment
Waterloo
Waterloo Bridge
Waterloo Station
Southwark
Borough
Westminster
Westminster Abbey
Houses of Parliament
Lambeth North
Elephant & Castle
Tate Britain
Vauxhall
Kennington
The Oval (Surrey County Cricket Ground)
Oval
Hungerford Bridge
Lambeth Bridge
Vauxhall Bridge
Victoria Embankment
Thames
Albert Embankment
Millbank
Grand Union Canal
New North Rd
Upper St
Essex Rd
Caledonian Rd
Liverpool Rd
Pentonville Rd
City Rd
Goswell Rd
Rosebery Ave
St. John St
Gray's Inn Rd
Farringdon Rd
Clerkenwell Rd
Guilford St
Hatton Gdn
Shoe La
Holborn Viaduct
West Smithfield
High Holborn
Bloomsbury St
Fleet St
Victoria
Piccadilly
Jubilee
Northern
Circle, Hammersmith & City, Metropolitan
Central
Waterloo & City
Bakerloo
DLR
Old Street
City Road
Great Eastern St
Bethnal Green Rd
Kingsland Rd
Hackney Rd
Leman St
Royal Mint
Cannon St
Borough High St
Tooley St
Jamaica Road
Abbey St
Grange Rd
Tower Bridge Rd
Old Kent Rd
New Kent Rd
Long Lane
Great Dover St
Borough Rd
Newington Causeway
Lambeth Rd
Kennington Rd
Park Rd
Camberwell New Rd
Clapham Rd
Wandsworth Rd
Victoria
Blackfriars Rd
Waterloo Rd
York Rd
Southwark St
Bishopsgate
Liverpool St
Leadenhall St
Barbican
Farringdon
Chancery Lane
Holborn
Temple
Embankment
Charing Cross
Leicester Sq.
Covent Garden
Russell Sq.
Pentonville Rd
Angel
King's Cross St. Pancras
Caledonian Rd
Upper St
Liverpool Rd
Essex Rd
Grand Union Canal
New North Rd
Kingsland Rd
Hackney Rd
Old St.
Great Eastern St
Bethnal Green Rd
Shoreditch
Aldgate East
Aldgate
Leman St
Tower Gateway
Tower Hill
Tower of London
Tower Bridge
Bank
Cannon St
Monument
Fenchurch Street
Leadenhall St
Liverpool St
Moorgate

EAST END (WAPPING)

Prospect of Whitby One of London's most historic pubs, Prospect was founded in the days of the Tudors, taking its name from a coal barge that made trips between Yorkshire and London. Come here for a tot, a noggin, or whatever it is you drink, and soak up the atmosphere. The pub has quite a pedigree. Dickens and diarist Samuel Pepys used to drop in, and painter Turner came here for weeks at a time studying views of the Thames. In the 17th century, the notorious Hanging Judge Jeffreys used to get drunk here while overseeing hangings at the adjoining Execution Dock. Tables in the courtyard overlook the river. You can order a Morlands Old Speckled Hen from a hand-pump or a malt whiskey. 57 Wapping Wall, E1. ✆ **020/7481-1095.** Tube: Wapping.

KNIGHTSBRIDGE

Nag's Head This Nag's Head (not to be confused with the more renowned one at 10 James's St.; see above) is on a back street a short walk from the Berkeley Hotel. Previously a jail dating from 1780, it's said to be the smallest pub in London. In 1921, it was sold for £12 ($24) and 6p (12¢). Have a drink up front or wander to the tiny bar in the rear. For food, you might enjoy "real ale sausage" (made with pork and ale), shepherd's pie, or the quiche of the day, all served by the welcoming staff. A cosmopolitan clientele—newspaper people, musicians, and travelers—patronizes this warm, cozy pub. The pub touts itself as an "independent," or able to serve any "real ale" they choose because of their lack of affiliation. 53 Kinnerton St., SW1. ✆ **020/7235-1135.** Tube: Hyde Park.

LEICESTER SQUARE

Salisbury An original gin palace, Salisbury's cut-glass mirrors reflect the faces of English stage stars (and hopefuls) sitting around the curved buffet-style bar. A less prominent place to dine is the old-fashioned wall banquette with its copper-topped tables and Art Nouveau decor. The pub's specialties, home-cooked pies set out in a buffet cabinet with salads, or fish and chips, are quite good and inexpensive. 90 St. Martin's Lane, WC2. ✆ **020/7836-5863.** Tube: Leicester Sq.

MAYFAIR

Shepherd's Tavern One of the focal points of the all-pedestrian shopping zone of Shepherd's Market, this pub occupies an 18th-century town house amid a warren of narrow, cobble-covered streets behind Park Lane. The street-level bar is cramped but congenial. Many of the regulars recall this tavern's popularity with the pilots of

the Battle of Britain. Bar snacks include simple plates of shepherd's pie, and fish and chips. More formal dining is available upstairs in the cozy, cedar-lined Georgian-style restaurant. The classic British menu probably hasn't changed much since the 1950s, and you can always get honey roasted ham or roast beef with Yorkshire pudding. 50 Hertford St., W1. ✆ **020/7499-3017.** Tube: Green Park.

NOTTING HILL GATE

Ladbroke Arms Previously honored as London's "Dining Pub of the Year," Ladbroke Arms is that rare pub known for its food. A changing menu includes roast cod filet with lentils and salsa verde; and aged bone-in rib steak with mustard, peppercorn, and herb and garlic butter. With background jazz and rotating art prints, the place strays from the traditional pub environment. This place makes for a pleasant stop and a good meal. The excellent Eldridge Pope Royal is on tap, as well as John Smiths, Courage Directors, and several malt whiskeys. 54 Ladbroke Rd., W11. ✆ **020/7727-6648.** Tube: Notting Hill Gate.

ST. JAMES'S

Red Lion This Victorian pub, with its early-1900s decorations and 150-year-old mirrors, has been compared to Manet's painting *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (on display at the Courtauld Gallery). You can order premade sandwiches, and on Saturday, homemade fish and chips are served. Wash down your meal with Ind Coope's fine ales or the house's special beer, Burton's, a brew made of spring water from the Midlands town of Burton-on-Trent. 2 Duke of York St. (off Jermyn St.), SW1. ✆ **020/7321-0782.** Tube: Piccadilly Circus.

SOHO

Dog & Duck This snug little joint, a Soho landmark, is the most intimate pub in London. A former patron was the author George Orwell, who came here to celebrate his sales of *Animal Farm* in the United States. A wide mixture of ages and persuasions flock here, usually chatting amiably. Publicans here stock an interesting assortment of English beers, including Tetleys, Fuller London, and Timothy Taylor Landlord. In autumn, customers will ask for Addlestone's Cider. A lot of patrons head to Ronnie Scott's Jazz Club, which is close by, after having a few pints here. The cozy upstairs bar is also open. 18 Bateman St. (corner of Frith St.), W1. ✆ **020/7494-0697.** Tube: Tottenham Court Rd. or Leicester Sq.

TRAFALGAR SQUARE

Sherlock Holmes The Sherlock Holmes was the gathering spot for the Baker Street Irregulars, a clan of mystery lovers who met to

honor the genius of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous fictional character. Upstairs, you'll find a re-creation of the living room at 221B Baker St. and such "Holmesiana" as the serpent from *The Speckled Band* and a faux beast's head from *The Hound of the Baskervilles.* In the upstairs dining room, you can order complete meals with wine. Try "Copper Beeches" (grilled chicken breasts with lemon and herbs), and then select dessert from the trolley. Downstairs is mainly for drinking, but there's a good snack bar with cold meats, salads, cheeses, and wine and ales sold by the glass. 10 Northumberland St., WC1. ✆ **020/7930-2644.** www.sherlockholmespub.com. Tube: Charing Cross or Embankment.

Appendix: Fast Facts

1 Fast Facts: London

American Express There are outlets at Heathrow Airport including at Terminal 4 (✆ **020/8897-0134**) and at Terminal T3 (✆ **020/8759-6845**). There is also an American Express Travel Service at 78 Brompton Rd., Knightsbridge, SW3 (✆ **020/761-7905.**

Area Codes The country code for England is **44.** The area code for London is **020.**

ATM Networks & Cashpoints See "Money & Costs," p. 8.

Business Hours With many, many exceptions, business hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. In general, stores are open Monday to Saturday 9am to 5:30pm. In country towns, there is usually an early closing day (often Wed or Thurs), when the shops close at 1pm.

Drinking Laws The legal drinking age is 18. Children 15 and younger aren't allowed in pubs, except in certain rooms, and then only when accompanied by a parent or guardian. Don't drink and drive. Penalties are stiff.

Breaking decades of tradition, England in 2005 abandoned its strict, often draconian, liquor laws, allowing 24-hour alcohol sales in England. Many pubs no longer close at 11pm, which used to be "last call." Of course, it's up to the publicans, but many, if they elect to do so, could stay open day and night.

Drugstores In Britain, they're called "chemists." Ask at your hotel for the nearest location. For an emergency chemist, dial "0" (zero) and ask the operator for the local police, who will give you the name of one nearest you.

Electricity British electricity is 240 volts AC (50 cycles), roughly twice the voltage in North America, which is 115–120 volts AC (60 cycles). American plugs don't fit British wall outlets. Always bring suitable transformers and/or adapters—if you plug an American appliance directly into a European electrical outlet without a transformer, you'll destroy your appliance and possibly start a fire. Electronic equipment with motors intended to revolve at a fixed number of revolutions per minute probably won't work properly even with transformers.

Embassies & Consulates The **U.S. Embassy** is at 24 Grosvenor Sq., W1 (✆ **020/7499-9000;** www.usembassy.org.uk; Tube: Bond St.). Hours are Monday to Friday 8am to 5:30pm, Saturday 10am to 4pm. However, for passport and visa information, go to the **U.S. Passport and Citizenship Unit,** 55–56 Upper Grosvenor St., London, W1 (✆ **020/7894-0563;** Tube: Marble Arch or Bond St.). Passport and Citizenship Unit hours are Monday to Friday 8:30am to 12:30pm.

The **Canadian High Commission,** MacDonald House, 38 Grosvenor St., W1 (✆ **020/7258-6600;** www.defait-maeci.gc.ca/london; Tube: Bond St.), handles visas for Canada. Hours are Monday to Friday 8 to 11am for immigration services.

The **Australian High Commission** is at Australia House, the Strand, WC2 (✆ **020/7379-4334;** www.australia.org.uk; Tube: Charing Cross or Aldwych). Hours are Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm, 9 to 11am for immigration services, passports 9:30am to 3:30pm.

The **New Zealand High Commission** is at New Zealand House, 80 Haymarket at Pall Mall, SW1 (✆ **020/7930-8422;** www.nzembassy.com; Tube: Charing Cross or Piccadilly Circus). Hours are Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm.

The **Irish Embassy** is at 17 Grosvenor Place, SW1 (✆ **020/7235-2171;** http://ireland.embassyhomepage.com; Tube: Hyde Park Corner). Hours are Monday to Friday 9:30am to 1pm and 2 to 5pm.

Emergencies Dial **999** for police, fire, or ambulance. Give your name, address, and telephone number and state the nature of the emergency.

Holidays Britain observes New Year's Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, May Day (first Mon in May), spring and summer bank holidays (the last Mon in May and Aug, respectively), Christmas Day, and Boxing Day (Dec 26).

Hot lines If you're in some sort of substance abuse or legal emergency, call **Release** (✆ **020/7729-9904**), open Monday to Friday 11am to 1pm. The **Rape and Sexual Abuse Hotline** (✆ **0845/122-1331**) is open daily Monday to Friday noon to 2:30pm and 7 to 9:30pm, and on weekends and bank holidays 2:30 to 5pm. **Alcoholics Anonymous** (✆ **020/7833-0022**) answers its help line daily 10am to 10pm. For issues related to sexual health and sexually transmitted diseases, call the **Sexual Health Information Line** at ✆ **0800/567-123.**

Insurance **Medical Insurance** For travel overseas, most U.S. health plans (including Medicare and Medicaid) do not provide coverage, and the ones that do often require you to pay for services upfront and reimburse you only after you return home.

If you require additional medical insurance, try **MEDEX Assistance** (✆ **410/453-6300;** www.medexassist.com) or **Travel Assistance International** (✆ **800/821-2828;** www.travelassistance.com; for general information on services, call the company's **Worldwide Assistance Services, Inc.** at ✆ **800/777-8710**).

Canadians should check with their provincial health plan offices or call **Health Canada** (✆ **866/225-0709;** www.hc-sc.gc.ca) to find out the extent of their coverage and what documentation and receipts they must take home in case they are treated overseas.

Travel Insurance The cost of travel insurance varies widely, depending on the destination, the cost and length of your trip, your age and health, and the type of trip you're taking, but expect to pay between 5% and 8% of the vacation itself. You can get estimates from various providers through **InsureMyTrip.com** (✆ **800/487-4722**). Enter your trip cost and dates, your age, and other information, for prices from more than a dozen companies.

Trip-Cancellation Insurance Trip-cancellation insurance will help retrieve your money if you have to back out of a trip or depart early, or if your travel supplier goes bankrupt. Trip cancellation traditionally covers such events as sickness, natural disasters, and State Department advisories. The latest news in trip-cancellation insurance is the availability of **expanded hurricane coverage** and the **"any-reason"** cancellation coverage—which costs more but covers cancellations made for any reason. You won't get back 100% of your prepaid trip cost, but you'll be refunded a substantial portion. **TravelSafe** (✆ **888/885-7233;** www.travelsafe.com) offers both types of coverage. Expedia also offers any-reason cancellation coverage for its air-hotel packages. For details, contact one of the following recommended insurers: **Access America** (✆ **800/284-8300;** www.accessamerica.com), **Travel Guard International** (✆ **800/826-4919;** www.travelguard.com), **Travel Insured International** (✆ **800/243-3174;** www.travelinsured.com), and **Travelex Insurance Services** (✆ **800/228-9792;** www.travelex-insurance.com).

Internet Access It's hard nowadays to find a city that *doesn't* have a few cybercafes. Although there's no definitive directory for cybercafes—these are independent businesses, after all—two places to start looking are at **www.cybercaptive.com** and **www.cybercafe.com**.

London generally has great Internet access. If you've brought your laptop, the quest will be easier, since many hotels are wired; rates run from £10 to £20 ($20–$40) a day, although £12 ($24) is probably the average. Countless Internet cafes and coin-operated kiosks can be found around town. Libraries are reserved for residents, so you can't rely on them. The most common Internet cafe chain is **easyInternetcafe** (www.easyinternetcafe.com). Fifteen locations are around town, with West End locations in Burger King's basement at Piccadilly Circus (46 Regent St., W1, Tube: Piccadilly Circus; 358 Oxford St., W1, Tube: Bond Street; 9–16 Tottenham Court Rd., W1, Tube: Tottenham Court Road; and east of Trafalgar Square 456–459 Strand, WC2, Tube: Charing Cross).

Legal Aid The American Services section of the U.S. Consulate (see above) will give you advice if you run into trouble abroad. They can advise you of your rights and will even provide a list of attorneys (for which you'll have to pay if services are used). But they cannot interfere on your behalf in the legal process of Great Britain. For questions about American citizens who are arrested abroad, including ways of getting money to them, telephone the **Citizens Emergency Center** of the Office of Special Consulate Services in Washington, D.C. (✆ **202/647-5225**). Citizens of other nations should go to their London-based consulate for advice.

Lost & Found Be sure to tell all of your credit card companies the minute you discover your wallet has been lost or stolen, and file a report at the nearest police precinct. Your credit card company or insurer may require a police report number or record of the loss. Most credit card companies have an emergency toll-free number to call if your card is lost or stolen; they may be able to wire you a cash advance immediately or deliver an emergency credit card in a day or two. American cardholders can call these toll-free numbers in case of an emergency: **Visa** at **0800/891-725, American Express** at **0800/587-6023,** and **MasterCard** at **020/7557-5000.** (The latter is not a toll-free number.)

If you need emergency cash over the weekend when all banks and American Express offices are closed, you can have money wired to you via **Western Union** (✆ **800/325-6000;** www.westernunion.com).

Mail An airmail letter to North America costs 56p ($1.10) for 10 grams; postcards also require a 56p ($1.10) stamp. Letters generally take 7 to 10 days to arrive to the United States. The British postal system is among the most reliable in the world so you don't need to

depend on Federal Express or some other carrier unless you're in a great hurry.

Maps See p. 22 of chapter 1, "Planning Your Trip to London."

Measurements See the chart on the inside front cover of this book for details on converting metric measurements to nonmetric equivalents.

Newspapers & Magazines In London *The Times, Daily Telegraph, Daily Mail,* and *Guardian* are dailies carrying the latest news. The *International Herald Tribune,* published in Paris, and an international edition of *USA Today,* beamed via satellite, are available daily. Copies of *Time* and *Newsweek* are sold at most newsstands. Magazines such as *Time Out* and *Where* contain useful information about the latest happenings in London.

Passports **For Residents of the United States** Whether you're applying in person or by mail, you can download passport applications from the U.S. Department of State website at http://travel.state.gov. To find your regional passport office, either check the U.S. Department of State website or call the toll-free number of the **National Passport Information Center** (✆ **877/487-2778**) for automated information.

For Residents of Canada Passport applications are available at travel agencies throughout Canada or from the central **Passport Office,** Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ottawa, ON K1A 0G3 (✆ **800/567-6868;** www.ppt.gc.ca). ***Note:*** Canadian children who travel must have their own passports. However, if you hold a valid Canadian passport issued before December 11, 2001, that bears the name of your child, the passport remains valid for you and your child until the document expires.

For Residents of Ireland You can apply for a 10-year passport at the **Passport Office,** Setanta Centre, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 (✆ **01/671-1633;** www.irlgov.ie/iveagh). Those 17 and under and 66 and under must apply for a 3-year passport. You can also apply at 1A South Mall, Cork (✆ **021/494-4700**) or at most main post offices.

For Residents of Australia You can pick up an application from your local post office or any branch of passports Australia, but you must schedule an interview at the passport office to present your application materials. Call the **Australian Passport Information Service** at ✆ **131-232** or visit the government website at **www.smartraveler.gov.au**.

For Residents of New Zealand You can pick up a passport application at any New Zealand Passports Office or download it from their website. Contact the **Passports Office** at ✆ **0800/225-050** in New Zealand or 04/474-8100, or log on to www.passports.govt.nz.

Police Dial **999** if the matter is serious. Losses, thefts, and other criminal matters should be reported to the police immediately.

Smoking As of July 1, 2007, a smoking ban went into effect in England. Smoking is now banned in all indoor public places such as pubs, restaurants, and clubs.

Taxes To encourage energy conservation, the British government levies a 25% tax on gasoline (petrol). There is also a 19.5% national value-added tax (VAT) that is added to all hotel and restaurant bills and is included in the price of many items you purchase. This can be refunded if you shop at stores that participate in the Retail Export Scheme. (Signs are posted in the windows.)

Telephones See "Staying Connected" in chapter 1.

Time Britain follows Greenwich Mean Time (5 hr. ahead of Eastern Standard Time), with British summertime lasting (roughly) from the end of March to the end of October. Because of different daylight saving time practices in the two nations, there's a brief period (about a week) in autumn when Britain is only 4 hours ahead of New York and a brief period in spring when it's 6 hours ahead of New York.

Tipping For cabdrivers, add about 10% to 15% to the fare on the meter. However, if the driver loads or unloads your luggage, add something extra.

In hotels, porters receive 75p ($1.50) per bag, even if you have only one small suitcase. Hall porters are tipped only for special services. Maids receive £1 ($2) per day. In top-ranking hotels, the concierge will often submit a separate bill showing charges for newspapers and other items; if he or she has been particularly helpful, tip extra.

Hotels often add a service charge of 10% to 15% to most bills. In smaller bed-and-breakfasts, the tip is not likely to be included. Therefore, tip people for special services, such as the waiter who serves you breakfast. If several people have served you in a bed-and-breakfast, you may ask that 10% to 15% be added to the bill and divided among the staff.

In both restaurants and nightclubs, a 15% service charge is added to the bill, which is distributed among all the help. To that, add another 3% to 5%, depending on the service. Waiters in deluxe

restaurants and nightclubs are accustomed to the extra 5%. Sommeliers (wine stewards) get about £1 ($2) per bottle of wine served. Tipping in pubs isn't common, but in wine bars, the server usually gets about 75p ($1.50) per round of drinks.

Barbers and hairdressers expect 10% to 15%. Tour guides expect £2 ($4), though it's not mandatory. Gas station attendants are rarely tipped, and theater ushers don't expect tips.

Toilets They're marked by PUBLIC TOILETS signs in streets, parks, and Tube stations; many are automatically sterilized after each use. The English often call toilets "loos." You'll also find well-maintained lavatories in all larger public buildings, such as museums and art galleries, large department stores, and railway stations. It's not really acceptable to use the lavatories in hotels, restaurants, and pubs if you're not a customer, but we can't say that we always stick to this rule. Public lavatories are usually free, but you may need a small coin to get in or to use a proper washroom.

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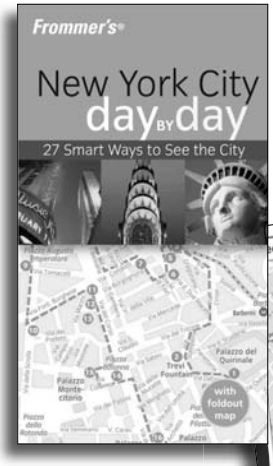

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